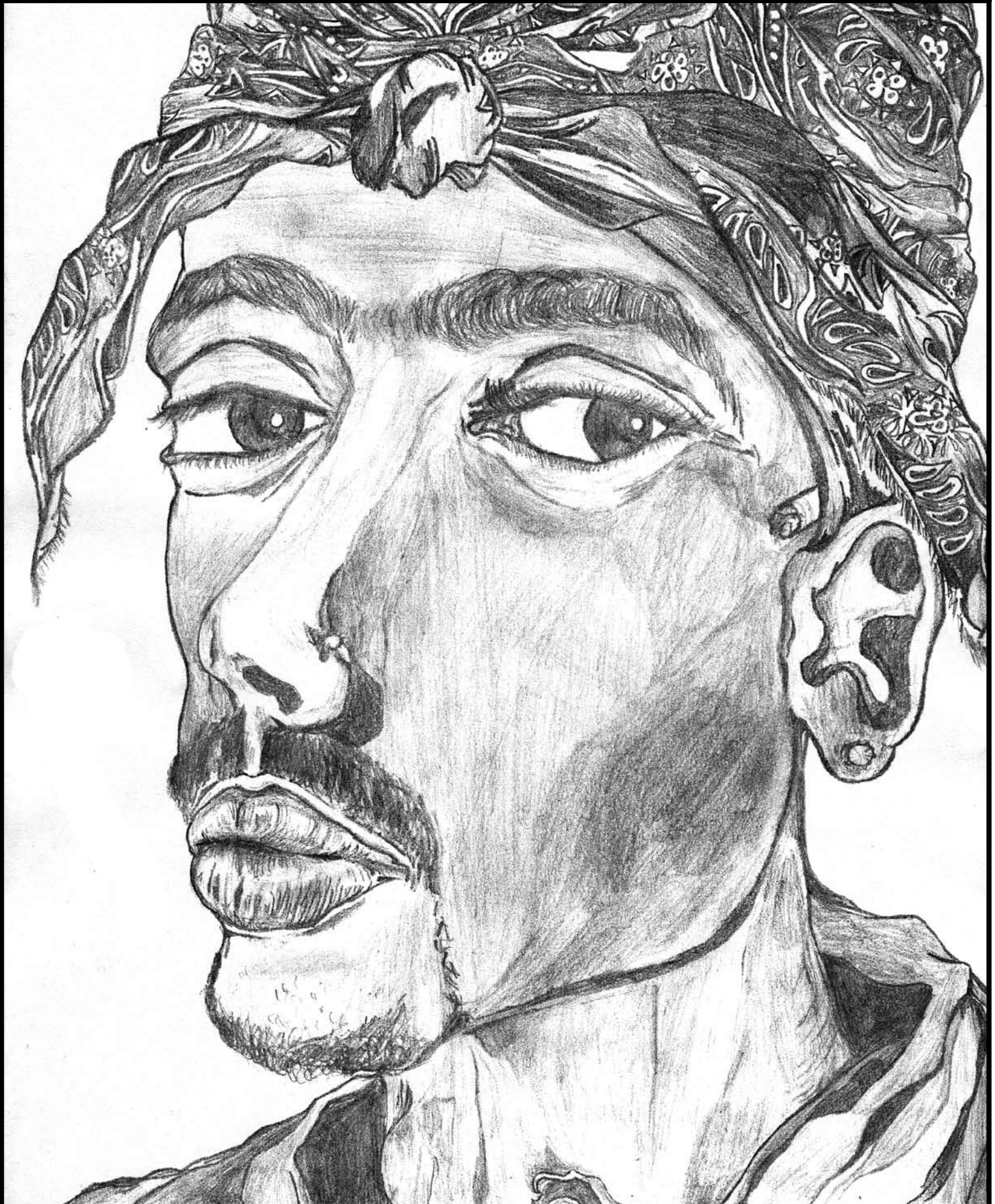




This past Monday, this editor and colleague, Patricia Johnson were invited to Fresno, California (in California's Inland Empire, about two hours northeast of Los Angeles) for two meetings, one to meet with the probation staff of their Juvenile Justice Campus aka Juvenile Hall to discuss the possibility of getting The Beat Within writing program inside the hall, and two, to meet with the young people in Fresno who are responsible for the "Know" publication, Fresno's latest youth 'zine and a sister project of The Beat Within.

First, our meeting with probation was incredibly successful. A big thanks to Rick Chavez, Ollie Dimery-Ratliff and their staff for opening the doors for our program! Also, we would like to thank Nancy Pressley of Focus Forward for her support and coordinating this important meeting. The initial workshops will commence with the young women in their detention facility later this summer, or should we say once we are officially cleared.

For your information, the Fresno Juvenile Justice Campus detention facility can hold 245 youth and the commitment facility also can hold 245 youth, meaning that on any given day, there could be close to 500 young people locked up there!

After the meeting with probation, we zipped over to "Know" headquarters, to meet the young writers and artists and to do a presentation on The Beat Within. What follows is the "Know" writers thoughts on The Beat Within and the presentation...

Patrice:

"The Beat Within", wow! The name itself gets my mind traveling. I believe it's a wonderful and amazing thing to do. I could remember a while back, my best friend had a couple of the books. We read a few stories out of it. I thought they were amazing. I believe it's a life changing experience for some people, and me as a writer I know I get excited when my work is published so I believe all those people feel the same way as I do. And trust me, it's a good feeling. I hope that this continues for years ahead and change people's lives.

Jaleesa:

Even though many of the young people writing in this publication have their own personal stories to tell, a lot of their writing topics are the same. A lot of the writings that I saw are titled, or about "one photo". I understand that while incarcerated, these kids aren't allowed to have very many, if any material possessions. They go in and out of the system, live a vicious cycle, and they lose more and more of what is dear to them.

On another note, I love the artwork included in the publication. Me, as an artist, look a little more closely at the art than most. To a few of the pieces, there is a deeper, much more serious underlying meaning. To me, it is very apparent that these people are going through their own personal hell, just to survive. Artwork, in it's own personal sense, can convey just as strong as message as words can.

Laqusha:

Passionate, driven, and inspiring are the best words to describe Dave Inocencio, senior editor for The Beat Within of San Francisco. Inocencio went to San Francisco State to become a social worker, but took a slight detour to help incarcerated youth.

LaKenya:

So far what I know about Dave is that he loves kids. I mean who would actually spend time with unruly kids with almost no hope or future?

The Beat Within, the title is very deep. This publication is weekly. It's very good to know that you have some people in this world that really care about what's going on in your life, or anyone else.

As I have heard, Dave is going to start a Beat Within right here in little old Fresno. I personally think this is a great way for our young people who are incarcerated to express themselves and how they feel on paper instead of them taking their anger out on the people around them. Dave will make a tremendous change in Fresno! Thanks!

Jesse:

A former San Franciscan social worker in the San Francisco juvenile facility did things no person would have dared to do. He stirred the minds, challenged the stereotype that you would normally run away from and accept. He gave the young who were incarcerated an opportunity to be heard, an outlet.

It all began on the subject of Tupac and the young people's emotions of how they perceived it. It has bloomed from a 4 page

weekly to a 65+ page magazine full of touching pieces about experiences and more.

The Beat Within began 12 years ago and is found in many states. According to David Inocencio, there wasn't much opposition getting this one-man dream project off the ground. "A lot of people fear that The Beat Within gives too much freedom to young people," says Inocencio. Any time you begin a project from scratch, you always have opposition. From 12 years of publication, this great project will hit Fresno in the fall at the Fresno juvenile hall.

Marcus:

I feel that the magazine, The Beat Within, expresses the feelings, thoughts of the youth and voices the problems in their life, and what got them to where the person, whether male or female, what the person has been through within the walls of the correctional facilities. Some of the incarcerated youth even gives ways to avoid the injustices of the court systems whether you are a meth addict, dope fiend, or just a car stealing gang banger, professional crack slangers. The youth come from different prisons or juvenile correctional facilities. Some are actually over eighteen years old in California Youth Authority (CYA) and prison, doing time for crimes ranging from theft, armed robbery, or whatever crime they got arrested for.

Carlos:

What "The Beat Within" does is a really deep opportunity for a lot of young people that have done mistakes in their life to make a change internally to express themselves. It's really interesting because chance that they have to write being locked up in juvenile hall is their only way to feel free at the time that they are writing their pieces.

It's really hard to find people or organizations that will take the time for these kids and help them while everyone else thinks that it doesn't matter what they think or feel. At least with this publication they know that what they feel and put on paper is going to go to someone that may feel or identify with the poem or the story or what they are going through and will feel connected with the person that wrote it.

These kids are in a very hard situation and they are screaming for help so I think that what The Beat Within does is admirable and gives an example to other people that don't believe in these kids.

Those are some fine words, and we want to thank you "Know" writers for having The Beat at your initial summer meeting and taking the time to share some thoughts with us all!

Now for the topics at hand, our first topic, "Doing the Crime, But Not Doing the Time" - "Do the crime, do the time." We've heard it a million times. But, is "time" effective in changing people's behavior? If you were in charge, what other consequences could you come up with that do not involve putting someone in a cage for a period of days, months or years? Think of your own crimes, and those of your friends, and ask yourself: What consequences (other than jail) might make me think twice the next time, or reduce the possibility of repeating my past behavior? This is your chance to be creative, and to use your imagination to propose some penalties for crime that do not include "doing time."

Second topic, Exit Strategy- President Bush is under constant criticism because he has no "Exit Strategy" for getting us out of the Iraq War. Our question to you is, do you have an exit strategy for the personal war you're fighting that brings you here? Do you want to get out of it? If the answer is yes, have you thought about your own exit strategy? What steps are you taking now — and planning to take in the future — to change your direction so that you can leave the war on the streets (or the war with your own personal demons) behind you?

Lastly, Coincidence, Déjà Vu, or ESP? - Have you ever experienced déjà vu, the feeling that you've been there before, and you know how it's going to end? Have you seen things in your day or night dreams that later came true? Have you ever felt something was going to happen — good or bad — and then it did? So, tell us of a time when one of those unusual and unexplainable events happened to you.

Ok, Beat editorial note readers, we hope you enjoy this latest issue of The Beat Within, despite us being five weeks off from being an actual weekly, but hey, at least we're getting a Beat in your hand!

Any thoughts on this publication, do not hesitate to give us a shout out. We're always looking for ways to improve our priceless product. Thank you all for taking the time to write and the time to read the thoughts of these powerful Beat writers.

This issue goes out to all you readers who have learned from The Beat Within, and all you writers who have used this forum to teach!

See you soon!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Volunteers: Rebecca Wahlgren, Elizabeth Crawford, Jen Zimmer, Sarrah Babcock, and Morghan Velez Young.

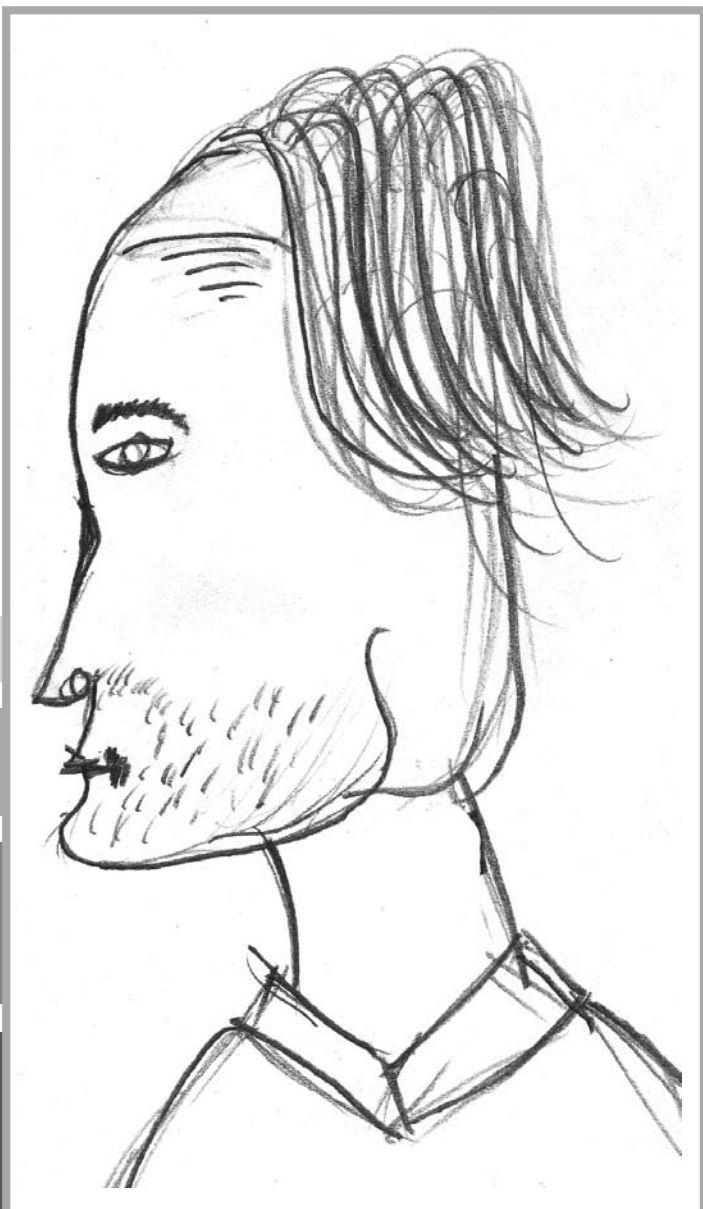
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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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Oh No!!!

Here I'ma let it be known
It's like who to turn to
Or where to go?
Them are some questions that I ask myself
People tell me stuff that I don't want to hear
Is it the truth?
Or it is the truth but
I just can't deal with it?
Sometimes I think to myself and say,
"What a coincidence!"
But there is no coincidence
It was meant to happen
Get mad, start burning in flames
Shoulda, coulda, woulda, why, ifs, and buts
At the end, there's no one to blame
Blah, blah, blah
Yeah, yeah, yeah
It is what it is
Got to make my next move
My best move

-Lil' Bipp, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's clear to us, Lil' Bipp that you are blessed with some wonderful gifts which makes you one of the people who can truly look to yourself for some of the answers to these questions. Even you recognize that when you wonder if hearing the truth is sometimes too hard to deal with. Beating up on yourself won't help, but thinking of the important questions — and really thinking about them — might. We know you and we have faith in you and your potential to move beyond this moment. We hope you have the same faith in yourself.

What The ...?

When I get out I paln to get my stuff straight. I mean I might smoke or drank here and there, but I will be gettin' my real estate license so I can be making real paper. I've also been thinking about the requirements to get a job at a facility like this so I can help youngstas in the future stay outta places like this that is just getting you ready for a pen.

I mean they put us in a place that looks like a baby Pen and give us food that comes from Santa Rita, but don't give us workshops for jobs or classes for drug addiction and shhh like that to try and really help us. They got it set up so that if they want we can be in our room for 23 hours a day cause now they got toilets in the rooms. What the ...? I ain't tryna shhh while the next ninja hittin' pushups right in front of me. That just ain't right.

Then I hear that they puttin' the makin' of jails over education in California, which pretty much means they would rather have our asses in jail than getting a good education. They gettin' us ready for the future — where jails will be the new business in, ya feel me.

Pretty soon, I bet you kids will be able to start makin' shhh in the Juvenile Halls, like how it be in the pen — and that's when the world really gonna be all screwed up.

I think the government is giving up on us and just acceptin' the hyphy shhh we be doin'. They gonna let us kill ourselves, either on the street or in jail and they would rather it be jail because then at least they can make money for the government.

Instead of putting more money on tha street to stop the stuff and goin' towards school and shhh, they gonna put us to work. Like I said — in the future, jail is gonna be the new moneymaker, the new product.

-Malik, Alameda

From The Beat: This is an incredibly sophisticated analysis of the dangerous direction the Juvenile Hall system could be heading in... it's worthy of a college student, or even a college professor. But the system is something you, can't control. All you can control is how you react to it, whether you allow yourself to be a victim, by continuing to commit crimes and put yourself back into this situation. Peace — and power.

That girl

A young teen and 2 months pregnant,
She was so scared of what her family would say
So she ran away to LA.
She called her mom and tried to tell her,
But at the sound of her moms voice she broke down and cried.
All she heard was "is that you?" and she hung up the phone.
The very next day she tried to call again and this time her little sister answered the phone.
All she could say was, "I love you and I'm sorry," and she hung up the phone.
Seven months later that little girl gave birth.
No one was at the hospital with her
She called her mom and she heard her moms voice and cried.
Through the tears she told her mom why she ran away her mom told her to come home.
Instead she stayed in the streets with the baby and the baby's dad.
The next thing this girl knew was that she was selling her body to make money for him.
Every night she came home he beat her because he was messed up on booze.
The girl woke up hopping that the next person she got into a car with would kill her but it never happened.
Her baby's father gave her a bad line of cocaine and she fell unconscious and died.

-Dennise, Durango Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow, what a tragic story. It shows the dangers of running away and getting involved with a bad person, drugs, and prostitution. How heartbreaking for the girl's family who will probably never recover from this. How tragic for the girl's daughter who will never know her mother.

I Need An Angel

I was raised with no fear
Taking drugs from my peers
Every night I go to sleep
I shed a couple of tears
Don't know what to do
Wit' my life
My future is gone
Jail is my home
Shhh! Put my name on the stone
No lie, I live on the block
Delivering rocks to these knocks
The only discipline I got
Is getting beat by the cops
Plus I'm paranoid
From this weed I smoke
And every time I take a hit
I'm still searching for hope
This my life, man, I can't it no mo'
Trying to make a quick meal so I can more out the O
Smoking weed, poppin' E's, doing crazy things
I'ma tell you right now, this ain't no life for me

Send me an angel
Send me a guardian angel
'Cause I see death around the corner

-Darell, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's pretty obvious, Darell, that you already know where the choices you've been making lead... and you don't want to go there! That knowledge is the beginning of wisdom and, we hope, the beginning of change. Is it possible that God has already answered your prayer, and that the Guardian Angel you're praying for is you? Are you making any specific changes in your life to stop doing crazy things, and start doing things that to a life that IS for you?

RIP Nam P Sept. 10, 1988 – Jan. 13, 2006

Nam, my cousin, is now in a better place.
Always down to ride, he gave his life to save another person.
It all happened when his lil bro got jumped.
They went looking for the people who jumped him.
They started chunking it with them.
One of my cousins got stabbed twice so they all ran to try to
get him to the hospital. Nam sees one of his friends getting
jumped so he runs back to help.
As soon as Nam socks the dude, his friend runs off
Leaving Nam by himself where he got stabbed to death.
I will never forget the day I found out.
At first I thought it was a bad joke.
Then everyone said it wasn't. I cried all day long.
The funeral was the saddest day in my life. A lot of people were
there.
Now we know he's in a better place. Rest in Paradise Nam
Pham. You live on.

-Peter, Alameda

From the Beat: You describe such a tragedy. We are saddened to hear of your cousin's death. Another unfortunate death. Does Nam's death inspire you to see beyond the life that caused his death, and the life that brings you to juvenile?

Doing The Crime, But Not Doing The Time

Other consequences instead of jail... how about community work? Like have them clean the streets. I wouldn't wanna do that, but it would be better for people instead of sitting in a cell. I think it would help people work together, get along. But I think that would only work for the low crime people, like people fighting, threats, low stuff.

For them hard-core wanna be thugs, I think they should go to Iraq. Why, because they're killin' their own people when they can be killing someone that wants to blow our country up, ya dig. I think it would help them "thugs" because they'll probably come back from Iraq and they been in hectic-ass shoot outs wit hella people dying and shhh, and they come back and see what they're killing for and how their killing ain't nothing compared to what they seen. So they'll leave it be, ya dig.

But I don't know. It sounds like a way to change a person, and also how to use his talent. But I don't know if it would really change me. Probably a lil' but probably I'll do the same. But I rather go to Iraq than be in here, ya dig.

-Jr. F. Ryhda, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're not sure if you'd have the same opinion about going and fighting in Iraq after you had the experience or not, but we think that's the very point you're trying to make. We not only admire these creative possible penalties, but we wonder why those with the power to make them happen don't seem to have the same creative abilities you do. We keep telling our writers that if you do the same thing, expect the same consequences, but the system itself just keeps doing the same thing... and it just keeps getting the same consequences. Time for some new thinking. Thank you for providing some.

George Bush and His Allegations of Mass Destruction

We've now been in Iraq for four solid years and still his theory of these so-called weapons of destruction still have not been found. George W. Bush is nothing more than thug strong-arming his way into another country and for the sole purpose of self-benefit. He just is a white gangsta in uniform that has forced his way in another country claming to be looking for the weapons but yet has found nothing. He has had ample time to bring truth to his allegations but yet has brought forth nothing even worth his accusations. Yet he claims he wants to stop violence but he is the man causing most of the death of young people and if you ask me he is the weapon of mass destruction to America.

-The Kid, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, we're refreshed and inspired to see a young person in juvenile hall raise such insightful questions and sharp criticism of the Bush Administration's actions in Iraq. You and your generation are truly the future of this country. Your words are powerful, Kid. Keep thinking, keep writing, and keep seeking the truth.

Family: My Exit Strategy

An exit strategy for me is just taking advantage of the family that I've been blessed with. If I would just take advantage of what was in front of me, my mind would have been in a different place.

I mean being around family is always a positive environment, no matter our whereabouts. It's love circulating our surroundings. It's a warm and lovable feeling. The conversation is always strong, no matter the subject. It's a beautiful thing. You can argue with your family and still be loved.

Basically I'm saying unconditional love is an exit strategy for me. If only I recognized the love I had before I came in here, I would probably be in a different state of mind. Thinking about the people I truly love could stop me in my tracks in certain situations. The power of thoughts is wonderful. The mind is like a computer, a beautiful machine. I encourage you to use it. Heads up, 'cause it ain't shhh on the ground, ya dig!

-P Crooks, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you're absolutely right — if only you had taken the time to recognize that a loving family is your strength, you probably would not have given the system the power to take you from them. So, we have only one question: what kept you from using that beautiful mind before?

Beat

Sitting in the oval office
Bombing for oil profits
Got us in some real big trouble
Get us out on the double

Do you know what's going on?
One more year and you'll be gone
All we feel is a bunch of grief
When you are gone we'll feel relief

I can't stand to sit here too much longer
And wait for another suicide bomber
Yes, America's at war
Yet, it seems impossible to settle the score

It's hard to be lead by someone who looks like a
monkey

His style of doing things is all too funky
The vice president shot someone in the face
Man, our leaders are such a disgrace.

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for this knowledgeable (and witty) commentary on our leaders and the violence they have led our country into, with seemingly no end in sight! Will you be old enough to vote in the 2008 Presidential elections? If so, do you plan to vote? Which candidate do you support, and why?

A Photo Of Innocence

If I could only have one picture on a long journey of mine,
it would be me, my mom, my grandma and sister in San Francisco on the ferry.

I'd have this picture because it was when I was little and none of this drug gang life ever had a part of me. It was when I still had my innocence and family still had this bond.

Thank you grandma and mom for the days where I was still innocent.

You tried to keep me that way and I keep fleeing from it.

-Jasmine, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Incredible piece. Touching too. We hope the running will stop and you will face the demons that hold you back from succeeding.

Going To College To Change

9-vole Beaters, this is your one and only a changed man. Hey, I want to say thank you to the Beat Within for publishing my thoughts and making my writing something positive.

Well, I want to let you know that I have decided to change my life because the life that I thought was giving me what I wanted, instead it has separated me from my family and peers. Well, I need help because I don't have the skills to be successful in society. I have so many plans when I get out. Hopefully I will go to West Valley College or San Jose Conservation Corps, or work in a decent job.

I want to ask all you, "What do you see yourself doing in 5-10 years?" Whatever it is, achieve whatever your dream is. Thanks to my good friend Ramon, who gave me the advice and the desire to change. Take care, y alratos.

-Josue, San Francisco

From The Beat: Awakening to the reality of how to get a decent life doesn't come to all of us at the same time, and sometimes doesn't come at all. So we're really excited to read that you have recognized another way, and that you need some help gaining the skills to achieve it. Even better, you are committed to seeking those skills in college where doors will open to you that you can't even imagine right now, until you come to them. You're on your way. Tell us about your friend, Ramon, and what it was that he said that inspired these changes.

Lost But Never Been Found

Swing away through the air of death
Only person that I got left is my shadow of myself
Depression is bringing me down
I find my life in a closet
Where it is lost, but never been found

Rainbows are swinging around my stomach of shame
I used to be the man
But it seems as many have forgotten my name
Tears of emptiness are filling my head
I'm losing everything, even my friends

All I need to do is open my eyes and face my fears
Many people feel that their heart will get crushed again
This isn't my last, it's my began
Tears of me dropping on the ground
I find my life in a closet
Where it is lost, but never found

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so pulling for you to open your eyes beyond the life that brings you here. You have gifts that need to be shared. You have people who love you and wish you to be home. We can only imagine the sadness you have in your heart and soul. Keep writing, it not only helps you but it helps many readers as well!

New And Improved Consequences

Instead of people getting locked up, I think people should have counseling sessions about what would happen to them if they continued down their road. I also think they should do community service or work for the family of the victims.

When I get caught for something, I rather work, and be in the victim's shoes so I can realize that the victim didn't deserve whatever happened to them. Or maybe I should be put into a job that'll make me work long hours and no pay so I can realize that going to school is way better. These are some of the "new and improved" consequences I came up with

-Baby C, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is one of the very few pieces on this topic that actually answers the question we had in mind. Plus, we really like your creative (and very difficult) alternative consequences to lock-up. Working for no pay is like having someone steal something you've worked for, and can make you feel what a victim feels. We wonder what would happen to drunk drivers if they were forced to work (for free) in a hospital emergency room to see the possible results of that kind of thoughtless crime. Thank you for thinking about this, and for coming up with some very creative suggestions.

Just Another Number To The System

I'm the state pen's new inmate
That's what the judge determined
Behind a stone wall
Where lives get taken
Pleasure isn't and my faith no more
'cause I am in a hole
with some of the world's slicker dudes
that's cold
this is the underworld, that's not a part of life no more
they close gates and lock doors
mixing my life up with another dead man's soul
I might be next to leave earth with a cold blow
Treated as a dog to the system
With a number name and code
Madness isn't respected so you can't get folded
So now I gotta focus on myself and do my job
'cause I'm not tryin' to be the next youngsta
a jailhouse mob
I keep expressing my heart, 'cause that's nothing
but free
I gotta get home before I get in too deep.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: If at all possible you must focus on you and not get caught up in the bull that comes with institutions. Yes, you are on a mission to return home to your family and that should be your number one priority. Leave the war stories and the hate, and allow knowledge and love to guide you!

I'ma, Make It

Wake up in the morning and I'm starving
No food on the table no money in my pocket
But I'm gonna make it I'm gonna make it
Living in my shoes is a struggle making ends
meet trying to hustle
Huggin' the block tryin' to bubble
But I'm gonna make it, I'm gonna make it

Lil' bruh had food on da table
Wanted to get it my own way, I wanted to be able
To get it wit'out moms even handing me nothin'
But out here on these streets I had to be
somethin'

Went from pullin' licks to havin' work in my pocket
Dis was the come-up in my life, you couldn't stop
it

On da grind making money, making a profit
Then everything changed when I first seen them
hot tips
Made me look at things in a different point of
view

I had to get a banger before I was one of the
chosen few

Day and life on da streets tryna shine
Caught a hot case, ended up doing time
Was there for the better to get away and clear my
mind

It was either a cell or in the dirt laying dying
But ya boy got talent on this here mic
I'ma make it for sho', everything's all right

-Filthy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We wondered where this was going to end up when we read the line about having to arm yourself, because we know too many examples where the strap leads to exactly the opposite of what it was intended to do. But you took us in a different direction, a place of gratitude for being taken out of this destructive environment long enough to think straight and to see your future in an entirely different light. You're right, you have real skills. The talent you bring to this writing — and the knowledge you will add by continuing in school and learning all that you can — are the best "weapons" you can arm yourself with.

On The Verge Of Spilling

I am blessed
 I guess
 I got on my Jesus' vest
 'Cause in this life
 It's all a test
 It's like I don't sleep
 I don't even think about rest
 Wow! I am feeling naked
 Born in the wild
 Like Beyonce
 I am Destiny's Child
 When I breathe
 It's like I gain more knowledge
 It's like my mind's the universe
 And I was born in college
 In the heat of the moment
 The wind's got my mind blowing
 I gotta write
 If my spirit wanna get high
 I wish I was Superman
 So I can just fly
 Never say good-bye
 "Cause I don't wanna die
 I let my pen cry
 You can hear it on the paper
 And I took the paper's virginity
 I guess I am a rapper
 I am allergic to this talent
 So

I put my soul
 In this led
 'Cause ya boy got talent
 I've been to hell and back
 And I'm still walking on the cracks
 Superstitious for some people
 But not me
 He's been bothering me
 For a long time
 Let me be
 This goes out to the faces in the sky
 Tell the angels to tell us
 How does it feel to die?
 I wonder if angels had to survive
 Y'all probably seen my writing in the Vibe
 Feel me up
 The Toy Story movie was great
 But I am eighteen
 How big of a man does it take?
 I love you, Mom
 No matter wherever you are
 I hope you not far
 Die slow for me
 I'll meet you one day
 Tell them demons we got Holy Water
 And that they ass is gone pay
 Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Once you start writing your poems, do the images just take on lives of their own? When you read what you've just written, how do you respond to it? Does it ever clarify for you what you've been going through in your real life? Does it calm you? Infuriate you? How do your friends respond when you read them your poems? Your mother is really on your mind, we can only hope your poems about her help assuage the pain of her death for you.

My Life

In my life, blood falls instead of tears
 Drugs and alcohol consume all of our fears
 Livin' life to the fullest without no cause
 Never followed rules, graduated to breaking laws
 A pattern that's easy to trace but too hard to break
 A bad habit like an itch that's too hard to shake
 Holdin on to dear life so tight never let go
 Tryin to change my ways but it goes so slow
 So I go the usual way, not against the flow
 Never let my guard down goin' blow for blow
 If I continue my ways I won't last too long
 So I choose to survive, 'cause that's what I do if I'm strong
 Livin' a life that makes me destined to fail
 A casket's my future, or just bein' in jail
 But I can't be in those places so I try to change me
 But if I try to change, I don't know how I'll be
 So accustomed to things, got a lil' too relaxed
 Knowin' as soon as I get out my enemies want me axed
 Is this the life I choose to live in time
 Or is this the life that I have given mine
 My mind says do right but my heart at times says not
 Knowin' if I square it up my future really has a shot
 So how will my life be five years from this day?
 We'll just have to wait and see 'cause I really can't say

-Big Vic, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope the new you and "livin' life to the fullest" will be to live life focused on school and living a life free of incarceration. Why the hell would you put yourself and your mother through further pain?

Information From The Dead Homie

The homie was dead, I was told
 I don't think so
 Because I still feel his soul
 I still hear his voice tell me
 To slow down, young homie
 You livin' wrong
 Givin' me information
 So I can leave the streets alone
 And stay strong

He told me he is wit' the other homies
 And they are all right
 They watch over us at night
 And pray that we live a better life

He told me life is to be lived
 So get up out the ghetto
 And everywhere you go
 You don't need that piece of metal

He said It's okay
 You can sleep now
 Take this information
 It's yours to keep now
 RIP, Ne Ne January 27, 2007

-Ne Ne, San Francisco

From The Beat: Jamal aka Neezy aka Ne Ne was killed on January 27th, 2007, just months after he graduated from Log Cabin Ranch. Neezy wrote *Information From The Dead Homie* about his own homie who was killed while Neezy was down at the Ranch, and how much that hurt him. And now Neezy, too, is dead.

So how will my life be five years from this day?
 We'll just have to wait and see 'cause I really can't say

Feeling it

He got my heart pumping
My blood flowing
In this life
It's always snakes in the grass
Life's like a shotgun
You could never be ready
For the blast
He can do the unthinkable
Like pave the streets gold
Am I too old
To understand the fruits of life?
Like a bowl of grapes
I sure hope shhh right
Another stripe
That I've painted on the zebra
My pen's getting hot
Maybe it got a fever
It's a war between heaven and hell
Some people choose neither
I think this poem
Goes out to Wally and Beaver
God throws the bone
I gotta be the golden retriever
You follow
I'll be the leader
'Cause once you' gone

You'll never come back
Push that button that says, "Empty
Me"
And I'll loosen up that latch
You can't lie
Yeah, y'all know this poem—crack
I got words to box with
Ali a knock you on ya back
This shhh crazy
My pen getting lazy
The way I am starting to write
Got me feeling like I am blazed
See, my love for writing
Is like how a human needs water
And when I write
I feel like I am in the air so long
You think I was Vince Carter
My little pen is cuter
Than you' daughter
Baby's feeling a little dry
Maybe my soul needs some water
You seen 'em
Beat him
It was crazy
How his mother had to watch
Them demons beat her baby
I sweat a lot

Like I am performing at a rave
I might be psycho
The world's moving so fast
I guess it's nitro
I don't wanna be seen
So I blend in with the night
Yo, my mind races a million words a
minute
But when I write, it's like time
I feel like I am in it
I swear to God
I never knew I had this talent
Now my heart feels a little better
'Cause at first it was out of balance
Winning this race
I know it'll be a challenge
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Who is the he who has your heart pumping? What or who sneaks up on you and bites you, like a snake in the grass? Who can do the unthinkable? Your poems don't have to answer these questions, Dark Side, but since you present your readers with these allusions, we can't help but wonder who this person is with all this power over you. Is it that you feel light-headed when this entity is near or is threatening you? Is that what causes your "high" that inspires your poetry to flow out of you? Is that entity God? Do you feel God enslaves you? We know you feel intimate with the Dark Side. What about a Light Side? Is there also a Light Side for you?

I Do It For Love

It's so interesting to look back on my past. Every time I get caught up, I find myself faced with the same question: why? People always ask me why I did what I did. Most of the time I find myself in a lie, but for some reason, this time I find myself at a loss for words. This time I had a feeling that they just wouldn't understand the lies. So, for the first time, I tried to give an honest answer.

The question was, "Why prostitution? Is it the money, the drugs, the freedom? What? You had so much going for you."

The best way I could explain it to them was by saying, "No, none of that matters. It's deeper. It's love, happiness of the heart. It's hard to explain, but I'm gonna try. See, when you live so long without a moms, a dad — so long without true love — when you finally find it, you don't want to lose it. For me, I've always been on my own, so when I lost my little brothers, my only love, I felt like life had no purpose until I found my family. Now my family consists of three ninjas and my baby mama. I love them with all my heart, and even though I have to sell my body to support them, I'm content, knowing at the end of the day I'm still gonna have my family and I'm still gonna be loved.

Now I don't know what you consider family, but I consider a family a group of people who take care and love each other. That's exactly what we do for each other. We sacrifice our lives for each other. We've been to jail for each other, at gun point for each other and are always there for each other. These are the people I love and consider my family. So when people ask why, I can now easily say it's not about material things. It's because I love taking care of my family, and I love being loved.

-Sunshine, San Francisco

From The Beat: We often describe The Beat as your opportunity to teach, and we believe you have done exactly that. We understand so much more now than before, and that means you have fulfilled the role of teacher. To be honest, we wish you could make different choices to care for your "family," but at the same time, it is the choice you are making with your own body, so it is not for us to moralize. But whatever questions your choice presents about personal values, whether you (or we) like it or not, prostitution is a crime, and giving up your freedom (and thus, being taken from that family you love so much) is the price you have "agreed" to pay. We think it's too high a price, so we urge you to explore other avenues. It is clear to us that you have some tremendous gifts (of the mind and the heart) that you could put to good use in ways that would not risk your health or your freedom. We'd love to hear your thoughts on that, and we thank you for this very honest piece.

It Sounds Like a Scratched CD

I go through this day by day
I go through this things replay
I go through this day by day
I go through this, things replay
It sounds like a scratched CD
It sounds like a scratched CD
It sounds like a scratched CD
This is insanity.
Why do things have to be the way they be?
Letting me be poisoned by the things I see.
This ain't pleasure, it's misery.
Selling anything to get by
Seeing crackheads with babies no tears to cry
Aye, got that dime? What it do?
Man I'm sick of this shhh! Déjà vu
Same thing, different days
Why things never go my way.
I'm trying to break free
How is it that problems keep finding me?
I hop on the bus and then a car
I ran with my feet and only got so far.
Wow. I'm making money the only way I know how.
I'm tired of hearing gun shots
Because his house and his house is on different
blocks
I go through this day by day
I go through this day by day
I go through this, things replay
I sounds like a scratched CD
It sounds like a scratched CD
I'm sick of this shhh — set me free.

-Lucky, Alameda

From The Beat: What an extraordinary poem. You do a great job of capturing not only your personal state of mind, but also the struggles of an entire community breaking under the weight of violence and problem — and what a great metaphor. A CD is supposed to play beautiful music but when it's scratched the music becomes an unbearable noise. Life should be beautiful music too, but like you say — not when it's damaged.

Father Days

I am very angry inside but I cannot show it. I don't want it to affect me. But I always ask myself why he wasn't never there. Does he know I'm still alive? I've always wanted a father in my life. All I have is my brother and mother... always looking for a father figure. When I see girls with both their parents makes me sad. I wonder how he looks. Where he at? Did he ever thought of coming back to help me so I wouldn't be in this type of place or play the role I did all my life?

All the abuse, struggle, pain and tears I shed. Never had a role model figure in my life. Always thought and dream to be dead. Why my family always tells me I have the same dirty attitude as him? Why I can't never be me? I did the same thing as my father, broke my mom's heart, physically and verbally. That's what my fam tells me.

I think I'm heading down the same road, the road of death. I'm in here always having nightmares in my dreams, sweatin', never can't go back to sleep! I cant handle this pain and hurt.

Wish I could meet that man. I guess it was meant to be 'cause he could have killed me and my brother and my moms like he did my sis. Thank you for at least putting the seed in my mom and my mom trying her best for him to not hit her in the stomach 'cause she knew I was meant to be in this world. Don't matter what the struggle, pain I caused her, she's still always here for me, supporting shedding tears with me.

Thank you mom. All I want to say is Happy Mother's and Father's Day. She remain strong and she still here by my side. Me and my older brother we are both locked up. This is like a dream to me. But I am very smart and ready to stop playing this game 'cause I already did and I don't care what people think 'cause it's time to fill this pain with happiness 'cause I'm very grateful to be here and share this life with The Beat and I'm cherishing my mom. She's my treasure 'cause nobody can't hold it down for me, not like moms.

-Lucero, San Francisco

From The Beat: The Beat is so grateful to you for sharing your life so honestly with us. Even though our Declaration of Independence says that "all men are created equal," your description of the life you've been forced to live proves that not all are given an equal chance, and that is so unfair. All we can say, Lucero, is that the tears of pain we cried as we read your piece were replaced by tears joy as we read your determined conclusion to use your fine brain to "stop playing this game" that has caused you and others so much pain, and to move forward toward a happy future. You've paid a high price for things you had no control over. Now that you're a young woman, you can make choices for yourself that will make your goal a reality. Take it one step at a time, always moving forward. Thank you for this.

Dear Beat

I heard about your little predicament. It makes me sad to think that you could possibly no longer be doing workshops here, unless you get money.

Honestly every time I've been here The Beat got me though it and gave me hope. Just reading short stories and opinions of other inmates made me feel like I wasn't alone.

The Beat makes me laugh, cry and feel accepted for who I really am. There's no way you can just stop coming to juvenile. I mean how will our facility react to the sudden absence of The Beat, if that were to happen? I'm afraid some of us will lose the hope and inspiration that The Beat has given us through our sentences.

Many of us rely on The Beat to get us through the day without going off or going crazy. It's reassuring to hear our fellow inmates from other units and halls going through the same things we do and having you guys give your feedback on situations and reassuring us that we'll get through this.

If I were rich I would sponsor The Beat, but I'm not. I'm thinking about starting a fundraiser for The Beat, but by the time I get out of here it may be too late. I wish who ever you guys get your funds from would reconsider and give you as much money as you need and realize that you guys are the bringers of hope and support many of us young people in the hall, through the workshops and publication, and that some of us just might lose hope without The Beat Within.

-Loyal To The Beat, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are not going anywhere! We are in his until the wheels fall off and we are confident that are wheels are on nice and snug. We love our work and we are glad you too, under very difficult circumstances, can embrace the mission of what it is we attempt to do each and every week - give you a voice that counts! We appreciate your thoughts and commitment to this work that you so much play a key role in.

Rise And Shine

I can feel it rising
The touch of this pen is immaculate
When the stars breathe
That's when I am outside
The howling at the moon
Is when the wolves cry
And the funeral
That's where our souls die
And in that coffin
Is where our bodies lie
Keep ya eyes open
And look to the sky
Or look the devil in the eye
When he asks you
"Are you afraid to die?"
You feel the rain now
That's the pain of the innocent
Am I equivalent
To the rest of these human beings?
These flying things
For the rest of my life
I've been an angel
But the world's geometry
I look at it at a different angle
Come to life

Gotta compete this work of art
And if I don't finish
Then I feel my soul was left in the dark
And my book is feeling a little dumb
So I fill it up to make it smart
Empty my brain into these pages
And my pencil is a super hero
I give him credit
He's courageous
And when I am mad
My rage is... too extreme
I am known to write
In the danger zone
Like a zombie off a pill
You know I be on
Without the right fan
I can't be cooled off
And I am light in the wrist
That's why
When I write
I write soft
My poetry ain't boring
Like golf
It will have you thinking
Like when you was sitting on a loft

The butterflies in my stomach
Got the flowers blooming
And once my words fill ya head
It ain't gone be room
In that medulla oblongata
So I say my prayers
In this verse
Dear Our Father,
Let me not be judged by my past
'Cause the devil had my radio
On full blast
But at last I am finally free
Thank you, God, for delivering me
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: You often write in the danger zone probably because your imagination is in the danger zone, Dark Side, so it's must be terrific that you may be able exorcize any devils who are torturing you by writing about them. When you walk down the streets on the outs, do you have visions like you write about? The devil of your imagination is asking you a lot of interesting questions, like, "Are you afraid to die?" That's a normal question for youth to ask him/herself, but from your poems, it seems like you live on the edge of life/death, is that right? Is that what you want? If you decided that you were sick of exposing your young life to the seemingly constant threat of death, how would you change your life? Could you change it? How would you start your metamorphosis?

My Exit Strategy — Part 1

When I'm in my cell, I'm thinking about what I'm going to do to stay out of juvenile hall. If I get released and mess up, I'm not going back to the kiddy hall; I'm going to county or prison. I need to find a way to keep myself from repeating my mistakes.

So when I was thinking, I was thinking about my homeboys, friends, and family. Me being in here doesn't just hurt me, but also the ones that love me. They need me on the outs and I need them too. Being in here is no way to live. No freedom, no rights. I can't even get a damn haircut because the DA don't care who I am or what I do.

I need to get my life straight, because when I have kids I don't want to be a father whose been in jail too many times. I should just forget all the bullshhh and go straight every day, but sometimes you can't help it and the bullshh comes to you.

God, please tell me what I got to do...

Part 1

-**Nguyen, Santa Clara**

From The Beat: You've laid out a lot of excellent reasons why you don't want to mess your life up any more by coming to places like this, or worse. And we appreciate how you plan to motivate yourself to make the changes you know you have to make. But this isn't a strategy until you lay down a plan to follow, like going to school, staying home, respecting your parents, etc. Yes, sometimes it's hard to avoid the bs, but the consequences for not avoiding it can be even harder, so think hard about your plan of action, and then follow it to a better future.

Them Streets

Growing up on them streets ain't coo',
especially when you lose your life on them streets for something you didn't do.

I lost a lot of loved ones through these past years,
hoping I can go back not shedding any tears.

It hurts a lot knowing my life is going down the drain.

I shed so many tears it looks like rain,

wishing and praying someone will stop the pain,

it's hard when you're out on them streets up to no good,

youngsters out there banging their turf, throwing up their hood,
now you tell me what to do,

I live like a square living life right,

or grip that pistol and bust 'til the other fool isn't breathing?

I live my life the best I can,

hoping my life don't come to an end.

There's not one day I feel safe walking by knowing my enemies should
be sliding by,

I don't want to be the next person on a shirt, 'cause I'll only be a
memory,

no more existing on this earth.

-**Quintor, Alameda**

From The Beat: Heartfelt piece. As you know the final choice is yours on how you want to live your life. You know the dark side too well, and now is the time to find the light, are you ready to really live? What will it take?

Exit Strategy

Some of my plans on what I'm going to do in my near future... I'm going to do my 6-8 months in the ranch. I'm going to try and take as much resources they can give me. After 6-8 months, hopefully, I'll be back living with my moms, doing what she tells me and respecting her to the fullest.

Also I'm going to high school next year, so I'm kind of excited and I'ma try to do good in school because last couple years I've been messing up.

My moms is planning on moving soon so I'll be getting out of the area that I've been living in my whole life. It's probably a good idea, too, because I will meet new people and this time I'm hoping I pick the right people to hang out with. Also I'll have a fresh start in a new school district.

Hopefully my sister and two brothers can get their stuff together just like I'm trying to. So after they do, we could all live together with my mom again.

-**Corn-Bread, Santa Clara**

From The Beat: It's obvious you've given this strategy for success some thought, and we think that thought will pay big dividends for you in the future. We hope your sister and brothers take it as seriously as you do, but all you can really work on is yourself. If you move forward looking for the positive, you will find the positive. We think things are going to work for you. Just don't forget the promises you make here.

If You Create Life, Then Why Take Life?

Who's running the game?

Who feels my pain?

When I cry

I make it rain

A slave with no name

A sharp shooter with no aim

If you create life

Then why take life?

Who's trying to do right?

Why throw that little boy in the ocean

When he don't want to swim?

"Don't make me do it, Daddy

It's just your Dark Side"

"Don't cry, Boy

It's gonna make you strong

It's okay to do wrong"

"Please don't kill me"

But I am not talking literally

My spirit ain't feeling me

Where's my shadow?

I need a friend

Ya, it's getting dark

I pull my hoodie on

X marks the spot

Tick Tick Tick

The clock is running

Dark Side, Dark Side

As I watch the moon rise

I pull my hoodie on

As I start to come outside

The devil's talking

His goons is walking

I scream, "Peace!"

He screams "Flesh"

I scream "Peace"

He screams "Parents"

I scream, "Flesh"

He screams, "You're next"

In my dreams

I am trying to get away

From the demons

But if they catch me

I'll wake up

I gotta wake up

This is a bad dream

But I don't want them to catch me

Or I'll scream

Damn, Dark Side

-**Dark Side, San Francisco**

From The Beat: Another nightmare poem, Dark Side. In this poem, your father is somehow threatening you so profoundly that it's the equivalent of throwing you in the ocean if you don't do whatever he's demanding you do, right? So you become the stranger, your only friend, to be able to avoid, defy or to be able to stand whatever it is you have to do to comply with what your father wants, right? In this poem, is your father the devil?

... I'm going to high
school next year, so
I'm kind of excited and
I'ma try to do good...

Entry 7

Political administration
Public relation
Livin in a hateration
Complication in the nation.
I need an occupation,
Maybe an idolation
'Cause all this extortion and corruption
I'm bout to have an eruption,
Feelings and tantrums
Runnin' through my damn thumbs,
Conspiracy, are you hearin' me,
Can't you see what I see,
Society tells you what you can and cannot be
So don't let this be thee,
Don't get caught in the penetration
Of the political administration
Public relation
Livin in a hateration...

-Jonathan, Santa Clara

From The Beat: How should we live in the free world? What must you do differently given you are living under a political administration within juvenile hall!

Locking People Up Is Not Effective

No, I don't think time is effective in changing people's behavior, because I think the more you keep someone locked up, the more crazy and upset someone is going to get. And when they get out, they are going to make up for lost time.

Nowadays people do a little bit of time and get out all crazy and do a crime ten times worse. But if you get caught and get out quick, you think, "I need to find out how to do it slicker and get away with it." The law don't have to worry about the convicts that are way smarter than them. Plus there are way lesser hassles.

But to everybody out there, think smarter and stop getting caught.

-Boy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean about those smart convicts, but we agree that there are much better ways to make people change their bad behavior than locking them up. What kinds of things do you think would be more effective? Your last bit of advice doesn't go far enough... If you really think smarter, you won't just stop getting caught, you'll stop doing the things you can get caught for!

An Alternative

What's up Beat dis Young G. Yup I'm back up in here sad to say. But anyway the topic today is doing the crime but not doing the time. I think another consequence other than getting locked up should be house arrest or something in that nature. Getting locked up just makes it worse because if you are a gang member you will always see another person from the opposite side or rival gang.

Of course it's easy to let them run their mouth but at the same time you don't want to be known as no punk. And taking kids our age away from their family or homeboys gets us so depressed and mad that we just snap and react in a violent way. That leads to catching more time and eventually people just don't care no more and end up in here for years. That's why I think people should stop catching time for petty shhh and the judge should try to take ten steps in our shoes.

-Young G, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That is a great solution for some people, but do you think everyone deserves house arrest? Realistically, we know that people will feel like house arrest isn't serious enough for some crimes, so what do you think should happen in these cases?

One Thought

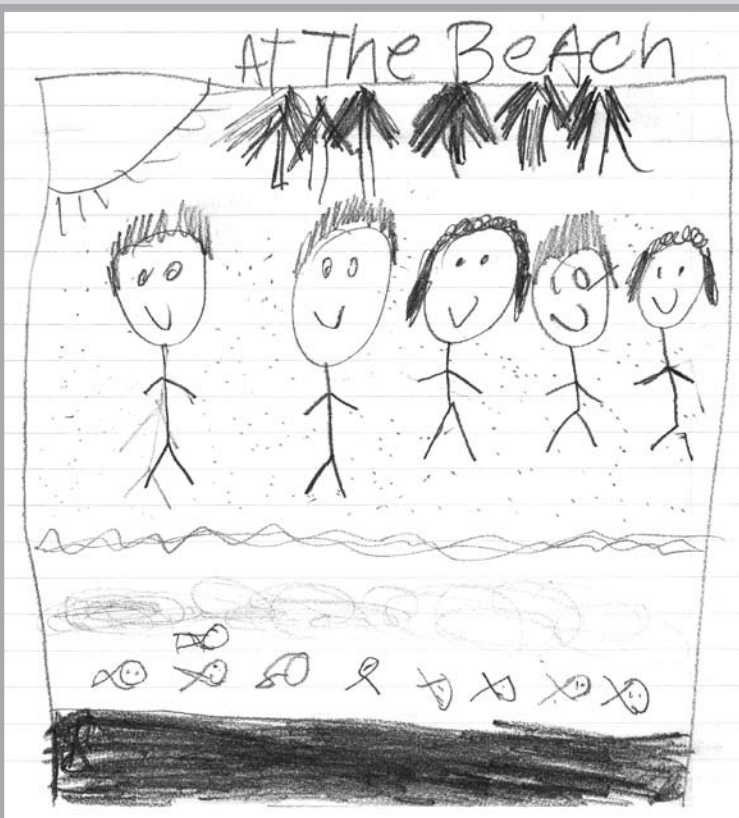
I was dreaming that my mom and I were sitting at the kitchen table. We were laughing about my dog, the dog my uncle says is his. But his mind is lost in a fog.

Now I'm sitting here in my room thinking of the pain I've caused her. I have to face it and tell her that I'm sorry. I want to be on the outs with my mom, so we can take a deep breath.

Week by week I'm thinking, when the heck will I get out. And when it's bedtime tomorrow, I'll be thinking the same thing.

-Jose, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: That's a good dream. But when you're awake, we recommend that you devour as many books as you can. Nothing makes time pass more quickly than reading a good book. In fact, as you near the end of a good book, you want time to slow down. You don't want the book to end. Try it.



Tears Of A Soldier

A beast in the streets
Savage kind,
Steady huggin' heat
Life of greed
spread your seeds
Do some dirt
Feet first
Fallen soldiers,
Gangsta party
Liquor poured,
hate the enemy
Wrong turn,
dead end
Incarcerated
To be a loner
Tears of a soldier

-Elisi, Alameda

From The Beat: Major regret comes with this life in the end. Power thoughts

Group Homes

Man, I'm back in the damn, nasty jail. I'm up in here for some punk shhh. Man, I was up in a group home in Napa for four months, and then they wanna tell me that my PO wants to terminate me.

For the first time, I did not run from the group home. The reason I didn't run is so that I can tell my PO at least I tried to complete my program. When my PO came to pick me up, I asked her why I was getting terminated. She said because the group home manager did not want me there any more. So basically he lied, because he said my PO didn't want me there. Now my PO's sending me out of state. For all y'all dat's going to be a group home. Don't run! Man, just try to knock that time out, feel me? I'm out.

-Yung Quez, San Francisco

From The Beat: Why do you think the group home manager wanted you out, and then lied about it? You should be proud of yourself for not running (and for advising others in your situation not to run). But are there other things you did there that you shouldn't have? Were there situations you could have handled differently, or is this really something beyond your control? What else can you tell us about what was happening in that group home?

Check On Their Progress

From my point of view, I think that, yes, people should do the time for the crime they committed. At the same time, sometimes the sentences on some people are too harsh and the judge or DA doesn't even think that some of these life-sentenced men and youth have family and other people they love and miss. Also, the judge or DA don't think about how some men and youth can and sometimes change and can actually become someone productive in the future.

I think that they should make some programs that check up on prisoners every couple of years at least to see if they make any progress or show any change 'cause everyone deserves another chance. I mean, we ain't animals.

Well Beat, gotta cut out. Alrato.

-Chico, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Why do you think people should do time for their crimes? If, as you suggest, the point is to make people change and make progress in their lives, is putting people behind walls away from the society they have to learn to live in the best way to do it? We like your idea of reviewing prisoners' progress along the way, but isn't that what parole hearings are supposed to do? If so, does it work?

Modern Day Slavery

If I could make any other changes I'll make it to where juveniles could bail out and to where we could buy stuff like snacks and stuff like they do in Adult jails and CYA, and the reason I say that is because we go through the same experiences as adults, almost. I mean, they got some of us using the same toilet in front of each other in the same room. That is embarrassing, and the person who has to smell it, I feel bad for, too!

To me, jail is modern-day slavery, it's just legal. The reason I say that is because about sixty-percent blacks are in here, thirty-percent Latinos, and it's ten-percent whites. Blacks out-do everyone, but we ain't stupid and we all ain't the same. We could change but we can't help the images that the community set everyday, like selling drugs, shooting each other, and making songs calling us stupid and dumb.

-Sunny D, Alameda

From The Beat: You have hit a goldmine of deep questions, bold ideas, and harsh realities in our society that we could spend a whole Beat dialoguing about. It is GREAT when youngsters recognize the institutionalized inequality of race relations in this country, the history of pain and sadness, and how all of that pain ends up in the "correctional" facilities.

Dying For What?

People ride or die for their homies who's just using dem like broken ice... Ninjas die for one member to da next, not realizing consequences of death, of gun shots. People ride to get down, buy one pound and lots of amounts of snow mountains.

People die for nothing such as sellin', poppin' pills, drugs, drinkin' alcohol, for others to get money to buy jewels, diamond chains, Girbauds, white tees. People ride for failure and just to kick it and chill wit' the homies or to get loaded or light headed off the drugs because they wanna be a follower, and a not a leader for their self or sibling or family members or for their loved ones who died in the past.

-Breezy-B, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is so sad to read a piece like this because it describes the reality of the situation — young black and brown children dying (and killing) for material things that they value more than God's gift of life itself. It makes us sad to think about other people who have given their lives for others, like Martin Luther King, Jr. Do you have ideas or suggestions about how to change this reality?

Quit The Beefin'

It's cool sometimes when you're on the streets doing crimes that you get used to committing. But it feel really messed up when you do a little time for stupid things. Then the courts think that the detention at YGC isn't helping you, and they think you gonna keep it thuggin'. But ya boy tryna just be cool and keep out of trouble, and do the right thing.

You don't wanna end up like ya boy, losing screws, hella messed up in the head. The streets is all your boy know. I was raised by the 'hood where I get it how I live, man, and it's bad. I got to be like this, but I hope I could change and just be good, and stay out of these weak-ass white man institutions, own my own business and maybe even get a job because being a gangster, or a thug, there's no benefits, and it's really already hard for the black and brown broths as it is.

So we all need to quit the beefin' because it ain't no money in that at all. But be about yo' paper, and you'll be cool folk, and keep yo' head up when it's hard it's hard times. Holdin' it down, I'm out.

-Yung Fred-G, San Francisco

From The Beat: This "weak-ass white man institutions" give a lot of people (white, black, brown and yellow) a lot of money. In the end, you're putting it down for them, because they make their living off you! What do you mean that you're messed up in the head? Can you describe with examples what you're talking about? Is it something you wish you had help trying to understand and overcome? Are you looking for that help? Where? It's clear that you know that the path you've been on is a dead-end, so what do you need to change paths?

Please Help Me Go Home

I don't have time to stay here a lot of time. I want to go home, but I have time to do my work or play games. I want to go to school, but I can't go home and school. If I have a time (I'd) go to school. I can't go to school. I am at YGC. I come here. I don't have something to do now. If I go home, I have something to do at school or home. Please help me go home or go to school. I have something at home or school. I like to go to school and doing work. I don't want to stay here in a lot of time.

But I can't sleep at here, YGC. It is very cold in my room. I feel bad now. I can't go home to sleep. If I stay here, it is very cold at the YGC. I feel sick at the YGC. If I go home, I am feel very good or well. Only after noon it is very cold at my heart.

My mom and my dad is worry about me at here. But my family come every day. My mom want to pick me up and go (take me) home or school.

-Kinson, San Francisco

From The Beat: Now that you're home, Kinson, we hope you do everything you're supposed to do (and nothing you are not supposed to do), so that you can stay there, warm and safe, and surrounded by people that love you.

My Exit Strategy

My exit strategy is to do something positive, something that most teens that grow up in the urban community are afraid to do. And the reason people are scared to do it is because they are worried about what their friends will think of them. That's why some of the thugs that have the potential to be something in the world just let everything go to waste.

But me I'm tired of being a jail bird, because that's what a lot of my family members are. I want to be the one to change the family name by going to school and trying my best to get a job and going legit

-Poon-G, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may think that these wonderful goals you've set for yourself are off in the distance, but you may surprise yourself by moving forward, one step at a time, and finding yourself there. Going to school is the key to this journey, so take that step and just keep walking.

Not Enough Exit Strategies

It sucks that a lot of people don't have an exist strategy in order to stay out of being locked up. I came up with my own this time because I'm here and it pushed me to figure things out. I hate seeing my mom and my family all down 'cause I'm in here. Another is that one of the persons I love the most, my lady, is having a baby with me. That's why I want to stay out.

I just need to stop fooling around in the streets and doing childish things that bring me back to this dumb place that will keep me away from them if I don't calm down and stay home where they need me to be. Well, I think that'll work. If I can do all that, hopefully it goes well.

-Cruk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sounds like you have strong motivations to stay out of here. We're glad that you've realized that a loving family and a child-to-be are reasons enough to keep yourself free. (But we have to ask: why wasn't keeping your freedom enough of a motivation? You need to love yourself as much as you love your family and you're your lady.) Now, make your family very proud, and teach them a lot.

Day After Day, The Same Thing

Every day in dis place
Is always played on repeat
It plays over and over
Doing da same ol' thang
Playin' hand ball, basket ball
Hittin' them weights
And if someone talks they shhh
Then we gots to regulate
And when I wake up every morning
It's the same-ol'-thang
Same nasty-ass food
And same ugly-ass roommate
I wanna go home
But the DA ain't tryin' to have it
They don't want to let me go
So I might just go out like a savage
So coincidence, déjà vu, or ESP
All them things
Goes on all the time in
Dis kaka-ass place
Well, I'm out dis place
'Cause staff is trippin'
So to all, stay up

-Tiny Samoa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're sorry this place doesn't measure up to your expectations and desires, Tiny Samoa, but since you gave the system the power it needed to put you in this "nasty-ass," "ugly-ass" "kaka-ass place," who are you really mad at?

Déjà Vu

Déjà vu to me is like a rerun or something. Sometimes I get dreams, which happen the next day. That has happened many times and I don't get how or why it happens.

Once I had a dream about me going out my house and a car almost hit me. The next same day, it actually happened, and I thought about it. It was all weird when it happens. You just have that feeling about it and I'm like, "What the hell! Did this happen before?"

-Chowsee, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know that feeling you're describing when we feel sure we've been in the exact same situation before, or we know what someone's going to say before they say it. Some people explain this by saying the left side of the brain and the right side of the brain usually work together, but sometimes one side perceives the situation just a nano-second before the other side, and then when the other side catches up, it seems like you've been there before. We don't know. It's weird, you're right.

Doing The Crime, Doing The Time

A good program someone should give a person for doing a crime is first giving them house arrest with programs so they could attend the subject for whatever crime they committed. It would be better if they made programs for every crime there is out there so that everyone would have a chance to change and learn more things that would help them think twice before committing a crime again. And if they keep being hard headed, take away some privileges such as taking away their cell phone or not letting them have a driver's license.

-Unknown Viet Boi, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your ideas are creative, and point out how the system seems to think doing the same old thing over and over again will work to change behavior. We think your suggestions are much more likely to make people better prepared to live without committing crime than what we have now. What kind of program would help you avoid the behavior that led you here?

To Live With My Dad Or My Mom . . . Or On My Own

I live with my dad. I've been living with my dad for about one year, and I'd rather live with my mother, because everything about my mother is much better than my life at my dad's house. The CPS courts sentenced me to live with my dad for five years, like, until I'm eighteen, but I'm planning on moving out by sixteen and get, like, a one-bedroom for me, and get a job by the age of seventeen, and save my money, and pay rent and water, and all that stuff.

The reason why I'd rather live with my mom is because she got a much bigger house. She got about a three-bedroom. The other two bedrooms are for my mom and my brother, but my brother is just about to move out of my mom's by next month, in Redwood City.

So, as I was saying, my mom is the most loveable mother I've ever had. I've never seen anyone (not) getting along with my mother. Everyone, like my lawyer and my PO, were saying that my mother can't handle me, can't take care of me. There was only one time that my mother can't control me, and it happened like this. Me and my brother were planning on going to a party somewhere, but, instead, we had service at church and so me and my mom started to argue about going to the party. We got mad and started to throw everything around the house, and that's the only time my mom couldn't handle me.

-Jeremiah, San Francisco

From The Beat: Was this one event really the only reason CPS gave for finding that our mother couldn't handle you? That doesn't sound too reasonable to us, especially if your lawyer and PO also came to the same conclusion. What did they see (beyond this one example) that you're not seeing? Anything? We understand your desire to be out on your own, but paying rent and water and electric and food, etc., is really difficult to do, even for adults with full-time jobs. So we would rather see you finish your school and prepare yourself for independent living than act on a desire to be on your own when you're really not ready to be on your own. Finishing your education should be your top priority, because it's the key to real independence.

I Have No Mother

Forget it
 I put on my gloves
 And my black pants
 And my black hoodie
 Wit' my black ski mask
 I ask my shadow
 Is he wit' me?
 And he says, "Yes
 Let's go, Dark Side
 It's our time"
 I put it in my mouth
 And swallow it
 Then drink something
 Forty-five minutes later
 I can hear my heart pumping
 I feel good
 But at the same time
 The demons is playing with my mind
 Telling me to commit that crime
 My mood changes
 And I can't move my legs
 For a moment I think they're dead
 They start moving really fast
 And the next thing you know
 I am running
 I see the lady
 And pull the shiny piece of metal out
 I yell, but don't know
 What I am saying
 Finger squeezes the trigger
 And it starts spraying
 The body's laying
 And I feel her pain
 In my head I know
 I just played the devil's game
 As I sit and cry
 I make it rain
 I realize what I had yelled
 And that was, "What's your name?"
 In the end she tells me that
 "I am your mother"
 I have no mother
 Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side, San Francisco

From The Beat: Powerful, evocative, even brutal poem. What did you drink that makes your heart pump? Did that liquid paralyze you or did your psyche somehow know what you were about to do with that gun and paralyze you, to try to stop you from shooting that woman? We here at The Beat can't tell where your reality ends and your imagination begins, so we'll just assume this poem pours out only from your imagination. But, since you write that the woman you shot in your poem tried to appeal to you to save her life as if she were your mother, we wonder, without trying to get too personal, why do you not have a mother?

Misunderstanding = Conflict

Lock me up?
 Why?
 We as a people are locked up already
 In so many ways, mentally restricted
 Physically violent and socially ignorant
 Lock me up?
 Why?
 Land of the free home of the incarcerated...

-Jaleace, San Francisco

From The Beat: Okay, Jaleace, this piece at least tells us something about what and how you are thinking. And you are right that for many, this is not the land of the free. But being "mentally restricted" is within your power to change. No one but you controls your mind. So, what do you have to do to free yourself mentally?

The Beat Goin' Broke?

Will The Beat end? That's the question that's on my mind. The Beat is a good program to me. It is a way for me to relieve stress in some ways. Instead of getting' mad, and frustrated about bein' in jail, I could write about it in The Beat. I like to read about how other people feel about being in here in The Beat. That lets me know that I ain't the only one in here stressin' or feelin' the way I am.

The Beat is a good thing. So why does it have to come to an end? Why do all good things have to come to an end or things that make people happy? Just like them Good ass brownies that we get for lunch, why do they got to be gone in three bites?

Why do people's best friends and families got to die, if they make life better for some people? Do God want us to suffer, or do he want us to find another good source that's out there for us?

-Dedo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're not going anywhere Dedo. When we said "we're broke" we meant that we had to tighten our belts and get over a funding hump. This publication has been going for more than ten years now, and its here to stay. We run on money, sure, but more than that, we run on heart: The heart of the young men and women who put out their passions, their souls, their knowledge in our pages. As long as you are ready to speak, we'll be ready to listen and publish.

Dear Son

Hey Mijo, what's up baby boy? I'm sorry for being gone right now. It's hard for me being locked up, but it's okay. All we can do is pray for a better day and trust me, it will come soon. I'll be there for you every day and help you with your every need.

All I pray for every night is that you will forgive me for not being there now. I want to be there to see you go to your first day of school, and see you walk across that stage in high school. That will make me very happy. See you soon. I love you and take good care.

-Alex, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Do you think your parents looked at you in the same way you now look at your baby, with hope for your future and hoping for nothing but the best? What can you do to make sure these hopes are realized for him? Seeing him walk across that stage to graduate will certainly make you happy, but having you there in his life to guide him and protect him will make him happy. We hope each of you can give the other that happiness.

Our Prayer

Heavenly Father, please answer my prayer
 I often wonder if you really even care
 It seems like you left me all alone to rot
 I'm still locked in this cage... I hope you haven't forgot
 I read the Bible every day of the week,
 And in there You promised me that if I believe
 That you'll set me free
 I have never written a prayer on paper,
 But here I go.
 If this happens to reach You, please in some way let me know.
 Heavenly Father, please forgive me. I praise Your name hella high,
 I sometimes wonder why we kiss your ass if we're all gonna die.
 Show me a sign, not Biblical lies, I need more proof to believe,
 That You died on a cross for me and hung until you couldn't breathe
 So many misconceptions of your laws and what is real,
 So I choose to hit the block and grip my ice cold steel.
 It seems I got to watch my own back,
 I pray every damn night, but I still lay on this thin-ass mat
 What do I have to do just to go to heaven?

-Bugzy and Steven, Santa Clara

From The Beat: No one knows if there's God or not/But have you ever considered this little thought/If you're packing while praying: "Free me, please"/He hears your words, but He also sees/You quote the Bible, but it says much more/"Don't kill," "Don't steal," make love, not war/Maybe He's waiting to see if you're true/To all those things He prays to you/If we followed the laws that the Bible has said/The world would be better, whether God's in Heaven or just in your head

My Thoughts On Doing Time

If we could commit a crime without having to spend time in juvenile hall or jail, I think that a lot more people would actually see. I mean open their eyes and change their ways for real. I've been to juvenile hall plenty of times and I keep messing up and coming back, because to me I can do the time it ain't nothin'. It doesn't make me learn my lesson, it doesn't make me want to change.

I just commit a crime and got locked up for a couple weeks, it's not really a big deal, but if they had an alternative program to help fix my way of thinking or help me to see that I'm basically throwing my life away doing what I'm doing.

People tell me all the time stop doing drugs, stop getting in fights, and I usually say "yeah, whatever, it's my business, my life."

But if I had to serve hours at a drug rehab center and have to see what these people have to go through, it would probably make me want to change because I wouldn't want to end up like that. I want something better for myself. And maybe I could live a clean and happy life.

-Mouthpeice, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Why do you keep coming back, what is it that sets you up to fail? What must you work on to avoid the traps? You know there are people who care and love of you and don't want to see you locked up, so maybe you can offer some suggestions to your advocates in helping you overcome certain issues that plague you.

New Coast New Era

Steppin' out to new life new coast new era
Wind blowin' in my face fresh air -- new weather
Never lookin' for a truce like a girl like Ciara
Lookin' for a pretty face, Latina world you'll find
Black Bentley coupe riding past kids is fighting
Reminding of the days of getting high in school
attire

Jobs don't want to hire 'cause skin is black and
you play with fire
Think the screws is loose -fixing fast to get the
pliers

White T - too long too bright just to fight in
Diamonds too bright, just to hang out with the
white man

Baby momma wanna trip, fist to lip for my money
Child support baby kids take two to get the stick
in

Drug food money different quarters for the
shipments

Days weeks months, glad to live after Christmas
Hangin' on the block might as well fish fo' your
death then

Eyes feelin' low fresh j's gon' show
With a blunt in my hand
Purple weed we gon' smoke

Can you believe, baby can you believe it?
Diamonds in my pinky ring, gurl lookin' right
Fresh coat

White T with a mouth full of ice
Can you believe it, baby can you believe it?

-Justin, Alameda

From The Beat: Justin, this is serious poetry - elliptical, original, with new images and constructions we've never read before, and a true love for the snap crackle pop of words smacking together like drumsticks on a drum. The last seven lines though, feel like you slipped from describing your life to thuggin' out. What happened? Did you slip into street slang? Are you trying to help us see where city kids end up? Break it down for us, as the author you are the only one who can explain it. By-the-way, no numbers for names!!!

Hear Me Cry

Chorus:

Hear me cry it's like mum, mum, mum
Hear shots they like boom, boom, boom
Stare ya' eyes at the moon, moon, moon
And when we die it like zoom, zoom, zoom

I miss grandmamma, I miss Josha
Puncho I never forgot ya plus the killed Tysha
And on top of that I got shot up and guess who didn't - my potna
Askin' God if his vision of him and his kid tryna wash me away
See the expression that I got on my face
See the weapon that I got on my waist.
I'm still trippin', my mama still slippin'.

Pray for me and wait for me
Soon is you and my daughter get rich get away from me
TI made a way for me

And Jason had a place for me
But God help me fly off just like a raven
Don't hate me, lady it's funeral, I'm soon to go
Young dro' Bless me in peace, wit' the bloom on
I remember the time, when my daddy was high, and I had my
room close

Bloom slow, moon show
I die in hours
The water goin' off but I cool my tear showers man

Hear me cry it's like mum, mum, mum
Hear shots they like boom, boom, boom
Stare yo' eyes at the moon, moon, moon
And when we die it's like zoom, zoom, zoom

-Lil' Drow, Alameda

From The Beat: What a chorus. We'll focus on that third line and say, yes... stare ya' eyes at the moon. The moon is our dreams, our reach reaching higher than they say it should, our magic, our mystery, something that shines in darkness... just like this amazing flow.



Jail Takes Everything Away From You

There is a way in jail they take everything away from you. They should put you at home and take all yo' privileges at home, and force you to eat jail food, go to sleep early, and everything they do, but at home. They should take the door knob from the inside of the door.

But in jail nobody cares about you, and they don't care if you guilty or innocent. Their job is to just lock you up. If somebody that cares about you did it, it would be bad, but not as grimy and corrupt as they do it in here.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like the idea of enforcing jail-like rules, but at home where people you love are in charge of the enforcement. If you were locked in your room at home, would you learn any lessons that you don't learn here?

Doing Time For Someone's Crime — Part 1

What it do Beat? It's your boy Richard the Grinch. Some people know me by another name like my street name, but I'm not going to give that name 'cause it's just the way it is!

Well Beat, today topic is doing the crime but not doing the time... Well Beat, what I have to say about that is it's sad when someone does the crime and doesn't do the time because of the fact that I'm in here because of some people want to do a crime and say that I did it when, in fact, I was nowhere near the place that they said I was! It suck because I didn't do the crime that these guys said I did! Now I'm looking at life because these guys put my name in it.

Damn Beat, why do people get innocent people involved? I was doing so good on the outs. I finally got my life cleaned up for once and got everything that I dreamed of, like a car, my own little place and a good job... I graduated culinary arts and started to save money so that I could open up my own restaurant! And now I'm doing the time for some other's crime.

Well Beat, I don't have much more time so I'm going to say a little something... Well I'm going to county on the 28th or 29th so I'll write you guys from there if I get stamps and envelopes so that I can write. Hopefully I can, 'cause I really want to keep in touch with The Beat. To all, stay up and be cool!

-Richard the Grinch, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We often wonder if it's more stressful to be locked up for something you did do, or something you didn't do. In any case, it's shady that someone falsely accused you to avoid their own responsibility, but it's one of the realities that goes along with being with people who are doing things they shouldn't do. We know of innocent people who have been put to death (executed) because the real killers turned "State's Evidence" to get out of their own punishment! We hope the system works the way it's supposed to in your case. What is your specialty in cooking? What kind of restaurant do you want to run?

Selling drugs was the high life for a minute,
but something that was cool for a minute
is now keeping me away from my family,
my boys, and my girl for 6-8.

Do You Ever Think?

Life is fast -- all we do is live life for the moment...
Do you ever think about the way life is after you die, when
yo' family cries.

Do you sometimes think about is there a heaven or is
there a hell, or are you just thinkin' about gettin' high
and poppin' pills riding on them chrome rims?
Do you ever think about the way life would be if you didn't
grow up in the streets?

Do you ever think about the way people act? Say they yo'
friend but stab you in the back in the end

Do you ever think that life is pretend? When you are
awake, you're really sleeping.

-D, Alameda

From The Beat: We don't know if you meant this to be a poem, but it sure flowed like one! That last line especially is a deep philosophical question about life. A lot of people go through their days without thinking about all the mysteries and wonders that life brings us... and they end up in a prison worse than any prison the system comes up with... because they're like puppets... just living on automatic without looking beneath the surface of things. Here, you look beneath -- does asking these questions help you understand yourself more? Will it help you get out of the game?

Exit Strategy

My exit strategy for staying out of the hall? For me an' everybody else in here, this ain't the place to be. I wasn't thinking about what was going to happen to me if I got caught doing the shhh I did, like takin' cars.

Selling drugs was the high life for a minute, but something that was cool for a minute is now keeping me away from my family, my boys, and my girl for 6-8. My exit strategy for when I get out is to just stay away from the bs and get through high school so I can show my mom I'm not just a screw-up, that I can do big things if I put my mind to it. Maybe even go to college. Or do something no one expects from me.

I'm tired of getting weird looks from the family. For once I want them to be proud of something I do.

-Cherry-Bombs, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think your family would be proud just to see what you've written here. And we really hope that what you've written here becomes a real plan that you follow because if you, it will produce much that you (and they) can be proud of. No reason at all that you can't go to college, if you follow through. Good luck!

This Government

Government ties
Government lies
Only way to know is to have
A Government education inflation
All over the world
Government Institution
No resolution or solution
Unless you got the heart
Of government prostitution
Prohibition
Now listen
Government fission
With Alcoholism made it illegal
The start of prohibition
Created organized crime
Now we doin' time
Time for my generation
To get an education
Significant information
Get characterized by your precision
Not that bad decision
Don't waste your time in prison

-Jonathan, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Regardless how dysfunctional and non trusting the government is, you need to truly get yourself back in school. You need to keep writing. You need to be the future leaders for tomorrow. Juvenile Hall must be your wake up call towards a better life!



Doing The Crime But Not The Time

I would rather face my uncle than do time in the halls, 'cause if I face my uncle, I still will be on the outs and not locked up. On the outs, food is better than the food in the halls.

-GB

From The Beat: In the end, if you'd rather be eating that better food on the outs than in the halls, you have to choose not to do the things that bring you to the halls. If you choose to keep doing those things, you're also choosing the hall and its food over your uncle.

Doin' Crime's Easier Than Doin' Time

What's poppin' wit' The Beat? It's ya boy, DB. Now, doing the crime is way easier than doing the time. Fifty percent of every person who is about to do something where they can go to jail, they will try and think they will get away, even though they got caught. If people don't want to do the time, don't do the crime. So many people cry when they get caught, but when they get away, it's all gravy.

-DB

From The Beat: Does this mean that you wanted to do the time since you did the crime? If "doing time" doesn't prevent people from doing time (since half think they won't be caught), can you think of other possible consequences that would make people really stop and think before they acted?

If I Ruled The World

If I ruled the world, imagine that...
I want all my funds, all my money, baby
Black diamonds and pearls, believe that
I made bling-bling and my chest look like a mural
I'm nuts... just call me Squirrel
These women act like girls
But these girls are just some girls
Act yo' age, not your shoe size
And maybe we can do the twirl
Ha ha.

-Iggus

From The Beat: You advise the girls to act their age, but are the boys acting their age? Are you acting your age counting your diamonds and pearls? There's nothing wrong with imagining yourself rich (or anything else, for that matter), but we wonder what you imagine about yourself and where you want to be in five years when you get down to being serious.

City On The Hill

Looking at the city on the hill from this lil' window in hell... The sun seems far from the flames. Behind me the air blows slow while the flames rise. The wish to be free is like hoping to go home.

-Jaleace

From The Beat: You say you're hoping to go home, but you are the one who gave away your freedom, so what does your "hope" really mean if you won't do what it takes to make it a reality? (Please, next time, don't write on three or four topics. Take one topic and write much more than two or three sentences.)

I Love You

What is love? A four-letter word that describes how one feels for another. The unconditional and everlasting, so soft, so sweet, like skywriting on a still day. One kiss can make your life hell or a living fantasy. There are three little words that go with love and they're "I love you." L is for loving you always, O is for only wanting you, V is for verifying our love, and E is for experiencing everything we went through

-Nisha

From The Beat: We don't know if love is like skywriting on a still day or not, but we know we love that phrase. It is a wonderful simile.

I Love My 'Hood

What's good wit' da Beat? This ya boy, Iggus coming from dat Unit 3 status, you know!

But check it out, Beat. Let me put chu on about me, man. I'm come from a neighborhood called Potrero Hill, and I tell you, man, it's real rough in my projects. Faces get twisted left to right. Crackheads walking everywhere or posted in hallways, maybe like zombies. It's ugly around there, fa' real.

But I still love where I come from, but I really see a lot of stuff up there that's shady.

-Iggus

From The Beat: If you love this 'hood, despite the shady things you see there on the daily, doesn't that mean you would like any 'hood that you were raised in. Can you see why most everybody likes where they're from, even though we're they're from is just an accident that they had nothing to do with. We ask you that question because there is so much violence that goes down protecting turf that each person feels is his or hers, wherever it might.

Exit Strategy

I plan on continuing school with all the right grades, and getting my diploma. After that, I would go to college and get what I need to get a good job. Then I would just live my life regular.

-Jacob D

From The Beat: This sounds like a good plan. Why didn't you follow it before?

Gone For A Hot Second

I'm 'bout to be gone for a hot second. I'm 'bout to be gone for at least eighteen months. That's gonna be eighteen months without being at home, without being wit' my girl, without seeing the homies, without doing hella shhh. It's nothing, though. I'm 'bout to go out there and knock dat time out.

-Young Quez

From The Beat: Our experience is that the most important thing you can bring to a new program is a positive attitude. Yes, you will miss many things that you love, but you will also be exposed to many things that will help you down the road, if you are open to learning those new things. Don't just "knock out" the time, use it for your own advancement. Good luck.

The Day In The Life . . .

Locked up! And I was doing so good, had so much going for myself... school, work, and so much improvement. Man, I'm going to court tomorrow and hope to be released so I could take care of me and work on me. I wanna go home.

-Jaleace

From The Beat: If you were doing so good, what made you do bad? What were you thinking by letting the system take you away from what was good and put you back in the box? These three sentences tell us NOTHING except that you weren't thinking at all!

Exit Strategy

Yeah man, this ya boy B. War in Iraq, that Is something that I am not worried 'bout. War on the streets, that's what's on my mind. How do you think it feels when you can't go to some part of the city? Man, I got to worry about getting shot or getting killed. When yo' mind is on stuff like that, you don't know what to think, what to do, or how to talk, or who is yo' friend. Or you can think, "Do my friend want me dead too, like everybody?" When you in it, the only way out is dead or in jail.

-B

From The Beat: We can understand why the War in Iraq is not on your radar screen when you're fighting your own war every day on the streets. But we can't agree with you that the only way out is death or jail, even though that is the consequence for too many young people like you. But we know others in the same situation who have found ways — through education for example — to leave the war on the streets behind them. We hope you never give up your hope of doing just that because if you don't make your own efforts to stop, then there really is no escape.

To Be A Truck Driver

My plans are that when I get older I want to get a good job. I liked my dad's job when he was a truck driver. He drives a eighteen wheeler and that's what I want I want, a fat truck, big, all fixed up and clean. I look at my dad's pocket when he gets his check. It will bring good money. That's why I want to do that.

-Garibay

From The Beat: It's good that you only have to look as far as your father to find a decent man doing a decent job to model yourself after. That is a blessing. Now do him, and yourself, proud by staying out of here and achieving your dream!

I Like...

I like to eat and sleep
It makes me happy
I like apples and junk food
I like to dance and write

-Giselle

From The Beat: This tiny introduction to who you are is almost too little to print. But since you say you like to write, we're giving you a chance to show us. Write something more than four little lines in an hour's workshop!

Ice Box

I think it don't make sense to lock people up in box's to do time. I think they should at least give people a program where they can get jobs, stay out of trouble and give these things to people that really want it.

-Carlton

From The Beat: We like your suggestion, Carlton. Can you think of other possible consequences that would lead to a better outcome than just putting you in the "ice box"?

Didn't Do the Crime, But Doing the Time!

Wassup with it? As for me, I'm keeping my head up! Today, I'm abouts to talk to y'all about what's above (the title.)

Well, I'm eventually doing the time for the crime I didn't do, and it's a messed up situation! Real talk! Right now I'm fighting an attempted murder and a 707 for something I didn't do and its messed up because I'm away from my family and my loved ones. I miss my baby mama and my son especially. Tone Kiki out.

-Tone Kiki

From The Beat: Come on, Tone Kiki, you can give us more than this! You've told us before that you're here for a crime you didn't commit, and we believe you. But our question had to do with whether there are better things to do with people who do commit the crime than throwing them into a box and hoping that they change. Do you have anything to say on that subject?

Hard To Keep Fighting

Well, my strategy is to get the best deal with my PO, but she is trying to send me hella far from where I'm at. But I want to stay in San Francisco, you know. But it's hard to keep fighting 'cause I still stay here an I hate being here. It's boring is hell. But maybe I might quit and take whatever they give me but for now I'm going to fight cause life is about try and not to give up but some times you got to give in you know. The reason why I want to stay is 'cause my baby momma is still out here, and I can't leave her here alone 'cause she needs me and I too.

-Ricardo

From The Beat: You say you can't leave your baby momma out here alone, but isn't that exactly what you've done? Whatever you did to get yourself taken away from her was the result of a choice you made, so to then say you "can't leave her here alone" doesn't sound like you're keeping it real. But back to the topic, we were hoping to read that you have a strategy for leaving behind those choices that put you here. Any thoughts along those lines?

From The End To The Start

The feeling is called love and it comes from the heart
You know it is love from end to start
Like an elegant dove that flies through the sky
I look to the heavens and wonder why...
You blessed me with an angel, an angel of love
My prayer is finally answered from the Kingdom above

-Wonder Bread

From The Beat: Can you tell us more about this love you're expressing so beautifully in this piece. We particularly like the phrase, "like an elegant dove that flies through the sky." That's called a simile, and we will remember it.

My Hope

What's up, Beat? I been here too long, almost a year. When I pass my program, I hope that I will not come back in jail. I can't wait to get out to be with my friends and family, have a better life.

-Felipe

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon, too, Felipe, but you have to do more than just "hope" to have a better life. You have to plan because if you don't, you can be sure that someone else will be planning for you. For example, if you don't plan to go back to school, it won't be long before you're doing the same old things that brought you here, with the same old consequences...

A Plan For Using — And Not Doing — Time

What's up Beat? This the young thug Skindonesia man, and I'm here to tell y'all and the rest of the world what I would do if I could do the crime and not the time. So here it is. If I had the chance to get out right now, I would probably move out the state, and get a high school diploma, and try to get a job part time. While I'm doing that, I would try to enroll in a junior college and try to get a law degree. Then, I would move my wife out there and have a family.

-Skindonesia

From The Beat: You are on the right track and aiming for all the right goals. Since you will be out of here, you can follow through on this plan, one step at a time. Never give up these dreams and, little by little, they can come true.

From Good To Bad To Worse

Many a time have I had a dream where things became realer. When I had a feel something bad was going to happen, it happened. For example, the day I came there, I had a feeling that something was going to happen to me. The day just seemed too good to be true. First thing in the morning, I came up on two bills. Then I came up on a cell phone. Everything I wanted to happen that day happened.

It was all good until I started drinking and smoking that day. It went all downhill. I threw a newspaper at a bum (as usual, messing with bums), and it turned out the bum was an undercover cop. Then I ended up here. So yeah, that pretty much is my story.

-Tooky

From The Beat: We don't have any sympathy at all for you messing with "bums" and we think you got just what you deserve. Why would you so disrespect somebody who is already down and out by throwing things at them, or messing with them at all? Do you always find people weaker than you to pick on?

My Exit Strategy

My strategy is to get a close placement for I could do the time quick and get out before the new year starts. But my PO and the judge are trying to send me away from San Francisco, and I'm not taking the deal they give me. The deal is in San Andreas or by Gilroy.

-Oscar

From The Beat: You're not thinking ahead, Oscar. You're talking about a strategy to get you out of here, and we're talking about a strategy to get you out of the life that leads you to places like this. Have you thought about that?

When I'm Older

The way I plan to exit out of juvy and staying out is to stay in school and finish and get away to college. But it's hard because people you grew up with and the way you got out and had to learn on your own because that's the way it is. Change takes time and you have to learn as you go. When my change kick I think I will be older.

-D-Mitch

From The Beat: Well, at least you know what it will take to get you where you belong at in this one life of yours. Finishing school is the key. Yes, change takes time, but don't wait until you're older to start changing. Set yourself some goals, and start now.

Déjà Vu

What's really good wit' da Beat? Man, I feel like every week I say da same thing. But I think I'm really getting out this week. But anyways man, at da beginning of this school I had a feelin' I wasn't going to finish the second half of the school year, whether it would be getting a job or just chillin'. But who would've thought I would be spending it locked up. But like always, I'ma knock dis out so I can get up out of here. But yeah, I'm out.

-Young Bunte

From The Beat: Is the "déjà vu" of your title the fact that you keep saying the same thing every week? If that's the case, then it's time for you to act in a different way so that you won't keep experiencing the same consequences...

Exit Strategy

My strategy I'm taking now is to finish my school years and get into a trade that will lead my life into succeeding into a very strong man that will be able to take care of my family and my son and the mother of it.

-Yun Jay Pitt

From The Beat: Even though we agree that finishing school is the basis of all good exit strategies, we KNOW you can do more than write one sentence about it. The problem with writing about more than one topic is that you cheat us out of your full thinking. Word to the wise...

I Didn't Do It

Doing the time, but I didn't do the crime
One more time a million thoughts ran throw my mind
But while I was in here I couldn't find nothing in my
mind to help do the time

When I came through these doors I felt blind
Then I felt the time to think, why did I get charged for
this crime

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: You didn't say much in this poem. What are some of those million thoughts running through your mind? Did you do anything that led to your coming here, whether your guilty as charged or not?

Jail Is Not The Answer Always

I think that jail is not the answer all the time. But sometimes jail does help because they take away your freedom, and once you sittin' in this hell hole for a minute, every night you praying to God to let you get out. By the time you get out, you should have learned your lesson. But some ninjas just "thug it out."

If I was in charge and somebody did something wrong, I would be like, "All right, six months house arrest."

-Anto

From The Beat: Does this mean that by the time you get out, you will have learned your lesson? What lesson did you learn... and will it keep you out of here in the future?

I Could Feel Tha Shots Comin'

I'm writin' about coincidence, déjà vu. Man, I had a few feelings before it happened, like one time on the block an' it seemed like most of the week it's been shootin', an' I was in the house and the homie came in an' was like, "Come outside!" I was like, "Nah." I had second thoughts because it's been a lot of shootin', so I was thinking, "It's gonna be shootin' tonight," so I was like, "Aight, but it's gon' be shootin'."

So I went outside wit' the homie and stood in front of the market, and I was lookin' at every car that drove by, but we walked up the street to get some weed, so we got the weed, walked back down the street, and after we smoked the weed, I forgot about looking out for anybody or hearing any shots. So I was talking on the phone and I heard two shots and I seen chunks of the wall on the store come out, so I ran in the store and after it was done, I told the homie, "I'm not goin' outside," but I went outside anyway, but I forgot about any type of shooting.

-Young Jeff

From The Beat: You may have forgotten about the shooting that night, but it's obviously been on your mind ever since! You're lucky to be alive. From the way you write this story, it seems like shooting in your neighborhood happens a lot. Maybe it's your trust in your instincts that keep you alive. When you're home again, how are you going to keep yourself out of the drama? Do you want to? Besides listening to your inner voice, how will you protect yourself?

Déjà Vu

Me experiencing déjà vu was that one night I dream of being in my 'hood. Don't know what time, or where at in the 'hood, but I was out posted with the homies and a drive-by came through and I got shot one time plus got graze two times. After all the bad news went on, I thought to myself and said, "This is déjà vu. Damn!"

-Yun Jay Pitt

From The Beat: You mean this actually happened or that you just thought it happened because you dreamed it? We have to make the same comment we made on your other piece ("Exit Strategy"), which is, give us more by choosing only one topic to write about.

Becoming A Better Criminal

If I was in charge of my consequences, I would put myself on ankle monitor. The reason I would say ankle monitor, because while I'm in here, I'm learning how to be a more successful criminal. Like I'm learning how other people got caught, and by me hearing about that, I learn how not to get caught.

-Young Meel

From The Beat: Would being on ankle monitor teach you the only true lesson in how not to get caught? That lesson is, don't do anything you can be caught for!

Crime Time

It's no point of doing a crime and you know you gone get caught, so you do a crime and you know you can't do the time. Nine time out of ten yo' boy gon snitch on you. But when it come to time, some people act like punks. Not everyone, but most of the people. Some people cry. Some people act hard and they really not. Them be the ones talking shhh off their doors and shhh. But when it come down to doing something, they don't do shhh there when they got room time they by acting like babies.

What I do when I get time, I just kick back, read, sleep and just do me. If jail ain't for you, then don't do the crime.

-Gregory

From The Beat: You didn't offer much of any insight in this piece, Man Man. We read it as just the same thing you're complaining about... another complaint. What we really wanted you to write about was thinking of other possible punishments for crime that don't involve locking you up, but instead you chose to give us the same old same old. Too bad! One thing caught our eye: you said "if jail ain't for you, then don't do the crime," so we guess that, since you did the crime, jail is for you. Right?

My Life

I'm gonna let y'all in on about my life. My life consist of money, violence, hustlin', life, death, family, and one special lady. I'm a let y'all know about all of them.

The money, I get it; the violence, I won't speak on; the hustlin', I was born to do it. Life, I try not to take for granted, because you can be erased at any time. Death, I don't want to meet it. So I do whatever's necessary. Family, I love them and they always come first. And that special lady, I adore. She is the reason I smile. My present and future. The one I don't mind wakin' up to.

So shout out to all the people who gone read this. Y'all now know about the topics I said. When I experience it, I love it. To my family and that special lady—I love you. If you a real ninja, you can relate. I'm closin' out.

-Hot Rod

From The Beat: What about the parts you touch on but don't discuss? Those worry us big time, especially because you mention them as if they're a part of your present life. What are you going to do about these, once you're free again? Do you have a heart for the others you involve in these?

Exit Strategy

My exit strategy is to do what ever I got to do to get out. When you locked up nobody wants you to get out, so they try to do everything they can to get you to stay in here. So I see it like this: people locked up with people that is going to say anything to mess with you like make you mad and piss you off. But you got to show some self-control and let people talk, 'cause that's all most people is about is just talk. But when you tell them to square up they still talk. Get what I'm saying? Every body talk about the guns they got. Most people when you take them guns away don't know what to do.

-Gold M

From The Beat: You've described a good strategy for making it through the hall by exercising self-control and not going off when people "talk." But we were hoping you would look at the bigger picture, and describe your strategy for exiting a lifestyle that leads you to lose your freedom in the first place. Any ideas for that? (In the future, we want you to choose only one topic — not all three — to write about. When you write about three topics, you don't give any one of them the time they deserve for a more complete answer. That's why we didn't put in your déjà vu piece because it was only one sentence and told us nothing.)

If I Was In Charge

If I was in charge, the system would be run completely different. It would be fair. I wouldn't give everybody that killed somebody life. It would depend on how they killed them, and why they killed that person. And that's the only serious crime.

-Squeak

From The Beat: Instead of deciding the best way to punish killers, wouldn't it be better to find ways to prevent the killings in the first place? And do you really think murder is the only serious crime? What about rape? Child molesting? And — especially if you're the victim — robbery?

Change Is Hard

I had déjà vu by coming back to JJC. I really thought that I wasn't going t come back, but shhh happens, unless somebody makes a change. But the reason I say "somebody" is I know I'm not. But I definitely know I can if I try. Don't get me wrong, I'm tryin' to change, but change is hard. But I know I can change.

-D-M

From The Beat: It sounds like you are confused... You know you can change, but you say you won't change. So, how many more trips to JJC (or worse) will it take before you do what you know you can do?

Eli Weisel

Eli Weisel was at a death camp. The death camp was Auschwitz. Basically the death camp was built to torture Jews, because Hitler didn't like Jews, so they'd go to the Jews' house and take the Jews out of they house. The Jews didn't know what was gon' on, so the SS officers told the Jews to get out and leave all your valuables behind and they left all the valuables behind and took they shoes and they clothes, because that's all they could carry. So Eli Weisel went to Auschwitz camp, so at Auschwitz camp they separated they families. The girls went with the girls; the men and boys went together.

Eli Weisel had to lie about his age because he was too young and his dad had to lie about his age because he was too old. So they stayed at the camp together and they was gettin' beaten for no reason, and babies were gettin' thrown up in the air and used as target practice, because they couldn't work. So Eli Weisel' dad kept gettin' beaten, so Eli Weisel questioned God, questioned his faith. So he asked God, "Why is all this crazy stuff happenin'? Why ain't you doin' something to help us?" So at the camp, Eli lost faith in the higher power, so it was just he and his dad, had to stick together because his mom and his sister were separated from them.

So, in the middle of the story, they had a selection to see if they were strong enough to work. So they had to run miles and miles nonstop, so Eli Weisel' dad thought he was gonna be selected to die because he wasn't strong enough and at the camp, they had to survive off of rations of food, off bread and soup, so Eli Weisel' dad didn't get selected, but his dad was always gettin' beaten. So Eli Weisel got mad because his dad wasn't old enough to avoid gettin' beaten. So Eli Weisel' dad got dysentery, a disease, and when you have dysentery, you can't drink water because it tears up your insides.

His dad died and Eli Weisel was left alone, but at the time, Germany and the US was beefin' in a world war, so the US invaded the death camps and they captured all the Jewish people, so Eli Weisel was captured and he was freed, but he didn't have no family because his dad, momma, and sister had died in the camps. So when he got out, he didn't have nowhere to go, basically. So Auschwitz camp had killed hundreds of thousands of Jews. So Jews make a little commitment while they were at the camp, to be loyal to one another, because they was all they had. They tried to hang on to everything that reminded them of being home.

So, basically, Eli Weisel was a Auschwitz survivor. It wasn't like it was promised for him to be a survivor, so he was happy he survived, but he didn't have no family—no mom or no dad.

But at the end, when they had been captured by the US and sent home to live their normal life—they were treated with indifference. People called the camps "the ghettos" and Eli Weisel realized that Germans didn't like Jews. Hitler's family was Jewish. Hitler killed himself because he had so many enemies.

-Young Jeff

From The Beat: You've retold Eli Weisel's story of Night, his account of his experiences in Auschwitz, very well, Young Jeff. You have a beautiful heart for Eli Weisel and the people who suffered and were murdered in the concentration camps during World War II. You have not only a tender heart, but also a curious, open, eager mind. It's wonderful to watch it expand, as we can see through your writings.

Gonna Do Big Things

My name is Fat Thug. I'm doing the time for myself, nobody else because I'm Fat Thug and everybody know Fat Thug. I been locked up in jail for a long time. When I get out I'm gone have a family and do big things when I get out of jail.

-Fat T

From The Beat: You've been writing this same kind of piece week after week, Fat Thug. Tell us what you're going to do when you get out of here to keep you out of here!

Lookin' For Change

As I ride around the town, some people wonder why I
bang, and gotta get down,
It's not that I want to belong and be accepted,
but 'cause the color of my skin is brown, and now my
soul is lost,
never to be found, 'cause I didn't choose to bang,
But this cold game has chosen me
to claim my name, and now every time I walk down
the streets
I gotta carry a thang, and as I hold that cold steel,
a certain thought comes to mind and a sudden urge to
kill,
the devil inside wants to take over and see some
blood spill.
I could do it right and leave no trace,
get away without catching another case,
but inside there will be another demon to face
livin' a life of sin
where leading a war we could never win,
'cause many soldiers will fall or end up in the pen.
Lord tell me will this life of crime ever end?
Will I suffer in hell?
Or will I ascend to heaven?
I pray every night Lord, as I wait for your blessings.
I want to change my ways,
'cause this life has taught me many lessons and for
my beautiful daughter
for her I will never fail,
that's why when I get out I will never see another jail
cell and that's on my life
I will prevail Lord!
I hope you forgive me for my sins and help me for my
sins and help me on my way,
only time will tell

-Tee

From The Beat: How has the cold game chosen you? Didn't you have a choice in the matter? Tell us how you fell prey to this lifestyle? Not all people of color become gangsters in your community, so, we need more than you telling us that your skin is brown. What did you see to become cold and feel the need to pack a gun? Yet now, you have found a higher power that we hope is the guiding light to a healthier life.

Doin' the Crime, but not Doin' the time

Tha only other way I think someone won't repeat
the same crime again is if they die, 'cause there's
hardheaded people out there, I'm living proof that
people won't change! It's just the way it's gonna be and
the people who change - they just wasn't made for this
kind of life.

Don't expect to live negative and get positive results.
If you living hood, you gonna agent hood results. Just
like water and oil don't mix, a bundle in a school box
can't mix either. Or a rag and college can't mix right,
the way it's supposed to. I know I'm a bit off topic, but it
kills me when people who bang and shhh.... Say, "Hey,
I'm about to go to college." It's good, but it ain't hood.
Ninjas really act like hood ninjas but is so fake! It really
kills me. But they say they monstas on the streets! I'll
respect a ninja mo' if they just keep it real. Oh and to all
those ninjas who say I'm gonna change and leave the
hood 'cause I'm 'bout to have a family, a kid, or my girl.
Just remember, you abandoning yo' hood family.

-Hollow T

From The Beat: We actually do agree with you on the basic point - it's hypocritical to both try to be positive and to continue to do the whole gang thing. It's a terrible thing to waste this life you have, which is so precious. What kinds of things happened to you, growing up, what was wrong with your blood family, that made you swear this kind of allegiance to a life that can lead to nothing but funerals, tears, the horrors of a life in prison, and the shame of wasted lives? We hope you find a better place to put your loyalty.

Man Enough

If you do the crime, you got to be a man and do the time,
some people be crying, and shhh, don't get me wrong,
there's nothing wrong with cryin', but fools be cryin' over
what they did,
because they are going to be doing a lot of time.
To all you people who are going out poppin' at others, and
you get caught, man keep it solid and just do your time.

-Vee

From The Beat: We all have different definitions of being a man, and doing time. Shoot wouldn't most of us cry if we knew we were looking at years in the pen, away from freedom? Or, after doing what you do to come here, doesn't regret kick in and wishing you didn't do what you did?

Revolution

This is our time, the up-rise
Of the youngstas, we gon' run it!
When the o-g's gone or can't no mo'
They lock us up 'cause they scared
And if they scared, they are not fit to have power
We are the ones that risk our lives
Just to hold on to a little bit of land
Or gang or certain race
It's time for a change my brothers and sisters!

-Elisi

From The Beat: You are the future, but you can't do a damn thing when you're locked up. We hope if anything you continue to empower the readers of The Beat Within with wisdom to see a better way than incarceration living!

Death's Door

Death's door in a life that's fast is constantly passed
Looking back, wondering how did I ever last
In a world so cold, considering all the dope I sold,
Wondering if this knock told, or if I'm doing right by the gun
I hold.
But who knows? Only I do, 'cause it's the path I chose,
But I knew what I got myself into, regardless if I meant to,
I did blow up quick, but did not slip. I never did get hit for a
lick.
That was successful, but to me coke sales gave me more
hope
Even though I got high snorting more dope
But no joke
My money got high with me too
Never would I snort and be broke up too
That's true, I get paid but do that before I get laid and never
on the outs repeat what I hear or say.
Speak no evil, hear no evil, see no evil
So we live as equals.

-Gator Angel

From The Beat: Gator, it's funny to hear you show off about your money making skills, when a) you were inhaling your profits and b) you are going to OWE the county money for your time in here, wearing their cheap clothes, eating their cheap foods. So don't give us this BS about how you're making so much money and how you "get paid".

The Power

There is power out there that the white man don't want us
to have,
They blind us with the drugs, media and guns
The white man took the Indians' land so why can't we take
it from them,
And start our own kingdom on earth?
Fight the power! If you die than so be it, for you will die for
the cause,
so that your children will inherit the earth.
Let your voice be heard and take action against this weak
government
Anything is possible, be strong and let my people go!

-Elisi

From The Beat: Who is the white man, and what is the power that he don't want you to have? Give us details! Educate us readers!

If I Was The Judge

If I was the judge, and youngstas was coming to the Hall, I would give them a chance – two or three. No matter what it was, because that person might not be as bad as the DA say, because they put it on thick, like mac lip gloss, anyway I would have them do months of community service. Or EM like three months.

TBW: But do you think that getting a lighter consequence might make people think they could keep committing crimes.

I mean yeah, because letting a person off easy 9 times out of 10 they are going to commit the same crime but not get caught.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: You've hit the paradox exactly here. If you let the person off easy, they might do it again. If you make the sentence too hard, they might just end up bitter and learning how to be better criminals in lockdown... what's the solution to this dilemma?

Ain't Worried

I ain't worried bout the time
I just do the crime!

Knowing that if I don't do something big, I won't be gone for long.

I'll be back with that lean that brought me this far.
I won't regret doing dirt

But I will regret getting caught, cause that hurt.
Momma with that same speech, got her feelings hurt.

I'm sorry, I'll get it right, eff the time served.

D.A. always judging with no feelings shown
Never knew me, but he swear I did the crime though.

Living hella mad even though I got a bright smirk

I laugh at the system cause they say I got no hope

I get it where I'm from and lil' do they know

I rep my turf but I got standards to be a baller, with no P.O.

-Mouse

From The Beat: You may not be worried, but we are. Do you see how hypocritical it is for you to be mad at the D-A for 'having no feelings' towards you, when you have no remorse for your crimes or feelings for your victims or your mother? The sad reality is this: you can laugh at the system, but you keep getting caught, and you don't learn from your mistakes or change your ways. Guess what? The system might have the last laugh.

Next Time I Blow Up

So many ideas run through my head

Good bad small big

Sometimes I can't control my emotions

Sometimes I can't control my actions

The days are flying by but my time is going backwards

Stages that I thought I'd passed are reappearing again

I don't want to do the same thing, become my last name "hothead"

Thinkin' about my consequences after I reacted.

When I become angry, I focus on nothing but what makes me mad

Stress is a big part of my uncontrollable attitude, but I wonder where the rest comes from

Reflecting on my past is going to keep me intact

Weighing my options is what will help me stay calm

So next time I blow up, so they say, I will not let my emotions get the best of me.

-Doug E. Fresh

From The Beat: You've written about a lot of pain and stress – and when you put those words on paper, you're controlling the emotions, not letting them choose you. You already have the mental tools to fight that loss of control... they're in the maturity and strength of every word you write. Now you just need to tap into that maturity, even when there's no pencil or paper nearby, and follow the advice you give yourself in this poem, on how to stay calm and keep yourself intact.

Just Call It Crazy

I experienced Déjà vu plenty of times. I had dreams, or I "day dreamed" about it, and a couple of days later, the things I dreamed of really came true. They really happened.

When it happened, I would like damn, I just had a dream about this shhh. I would be "geeking" like I just dreamed this shhh a couple of days. A lot of things like Déjà vu happen to me since I was little, but I don't trip off of it really.

I just call it crazy.

-Doogie

From The Beat: So are you saying it doesn't make you wonder just what is going out there – how the universe makes these crazy things happen?

People Change Because They Want To

No I don't think that time changes your behavior, unless you want it to. Some people change because they want to, but some people want to change so they change.

I knew people who came to this camp and when they got out they turn their lives around and doing good right now. So I don't think that time changes behavior.

-Akar

From The Beat: If not time, then what is it that makes people want to change? Is it from within? Is it having a baby? Is it the influence of a family member? Is it outgrowing trouble? What about you?

When I Turn Eighteen

No, I don't think "time" is effective in changing people's behavior.

It doesn't because I have been to jail plenty of times but I still act the same 'cause I'm always going to act the same. It might change me, when I get older but not while I'm going to Juvenile Hall. When I turn 18, I'm going to stop wildin' out, 'cause you can get more time when you're a grown up.

-Oatmeal

From The Beat: On the one hand, it's good to see you thinking about the future, on the other, you know by now how many young men have been tried as adults because of things they did when they were 'wildin' out'... changing your life will be one of the hardest things you ever do, why not start right now!

The Janky System

I was doing a good ass program, waiting for camp to come and get me from my old unit where I was since I got here. That unit was fine. I got to see my parents in person, not like here where we get to see our loved ones from behind a glass! That is until the system hated and said I was getting transferred to the max unit.

This shhh is hella weak! I ain't got no freedom, but that's how the system goes, if you do a stupid crime be prepared to suffer and feel like an animal 'cause this is what it is all about. Keep your head up!

-B

From The Beat: What was their explanation for transferring you? Next time ask, if you didn't already. They have their reasons, like it or not.

Start Listening

If I was to plan an exit strategy for me, it would start for me to start listening to the people who care most about me, instead of thinking I know everything about life.

If I was listening I would not be here. I just need to change my attitude and my whole outlook on life, then I can do anything if I work for it.

Yadidadi.

-Jay

From The Beat: Now you know what you need to do... who are the ones who care most about you, and what kinds of advice do they give? Do you think you'll pay attention this time around?

What If?

What if I never see the block again?
 What if I never get to see home again?
 What if I never get to take a bath alone?
 What if I could never get to kiss a lady again?
 What if I never get to see my mom again?
 What if I was never able to leave this institution?
 These are the things I think about in my room
 From time to time, but even with these things in
 Mind I still can't find a way to change my life.

-Young Squeek

From The Beat: What must you do to embrace the things you love again? IT falls on you young man, to begin making better decisions, otherwise your life is going to be sad and full of regret.

No More Trouble

When I get a release I'm going to
 Stay out of trouble and do what I have
 To do and get new friends. I'm going
 To stay out of Oakland and away
 From trouble. My Mom wanted me to
 Move to New York, but I said no.
 That is why I'm here because
 I didn't listen to her and got into
 Trouble.

-Young Trouble

From The Beat: If this is what it takes to lead a healthy life, we think you are making the right choices as hard as they are.

I Just Wanted to Be Free

I had did a crime, and the judge sent me to camp and I'd end up running, then I got caught then the judge sent me back to camp.

I did a couple of days in camp and I had ended up running again. Then I got caught and the judge sent me back to camp for the third time.

I ended up cutting again, but now that I am about to be eighteen, I won't be coming back to Juvenile Hall.

If I could go back to court to find out what they're going to do to me, I hope and I pray they let me go home and start a new life.

But every time I got caught I didn't catch a case – I just wanted to be free.

-Lil' Mess

From The Beat: We feel for you, wanting to be free. But being on the run really isn't freedom. You always have to be looking over your shoulder, worrying about getting caught, it's like it keeps you in limbo. What's going to happen this next time? Will you run again, or will you decide that TRUE FREEDOM is worth being patient for?

Boon RIP

I'm writin' about Boon who got killed. My bra stuck in my mind. I miss all the good times we had smoking, drinking, and a lot more. He was just in my face, now he gone, I don't wanna accept it but I got to.

I know he watchin' over me though, cheesing and shhhh. That was my ninja and I miss him for sure. I catch myself always thinking about my ninja. Whenever a ninja see me zonin' out, that's cause I'm thinking 'bout Boon faithfully. He gon' stay in my heart. I ain't the only ninja who miss him. The whole hood do.

He was a hitta for sure, but had a good heart at the same time.

He taught me a lot. So Boon, ninja you always gon' be about my heart.

-Love Ya Boon

From The Beat: You turned your grief and sorrow here into a message of love, honor and respect. If Boon were here to read it, he'd feel you for sure.

When I Get Out

They tryin' to put me on E-M
 when I get out I'm just gonna pimp that.
 Then when I get off, I'm gonna go to school every day
 I'm gonna buy a Regal and put it on some Twenty-twos
 go to the mall and talk to girls with my partners,
 drive around and talk to girls walkin' down the street.
 Well, I'm not comin' back here because this is not
 The place to be goin'.

-Lil' Rich

From the Beat: Sounds OK. Going to school is good. Having fun driving your car with your license talking to girls and friends, as long as you are handling business sounds harmless.

Being in Juvenile

Being in juvenile is like being in the mental hospital. You can't do nothing but sleep and read. You don't eat much but a little Plate of food. Juvenile is no place to be at. It is a mad place. So follow these instructions to not be in here:

Stay in school

Choose the right friends

Go straight home from school

Say no to drugs

If you follow these instructions you will be safe. You know what I mean!!!

-Peakoeey

From The Beat: Jail is not a healthy place to be. We like your suggestions. We hope you too can follow your own rules.

Doing The Crime But Not The Time

I have did a lot of crimes that I didn't get caught for, but while I been in the hall, I think I been doing time for the stuff I didn't get caught for. But that has been cool.

I learned a lot while being in this facility. It do change your behavior because to me, it's like I wouldn't want to do the wrong thang if this is where I would be. The long hours in your room can change you too, mentally, sometimes emotionally. Know when I am freed I will do what I can not to be back here.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Do you think that's like karma? That eventually our mistakes, sins, bad judgment, bad luck, (or however you think of it) catch up with us? We admire you for treating this difficult experience as a learning opportunity, and for thinking about what you can do differently on the outs to avoid coming back to juvenile hall

What I'm Trying To Do In Life

What I'm trying to do in life is the only thing I been thinking about for the past week. In life, I want to do something where I'm helping people because right now that's one thing that I do all the time that I really enjoy doing. It seems like I always know what to say to help them upgrade their life.

I also want to do something with my artistic skill. That one thing that I know God for sure blessed me to do something with my ability to draw. Whatever I do, I'm going to still be in to sports, especially football.

When I get out of college, I think I'm going to look forward to being in Arena Football or the semi-pro league if I don't make it in the NFL. And when I get into college I'm going to major in business and minor in art, play football so that when I get out I'll have a lot of money-making options.

-Thinking Big

From The Beat: This is exciting! Being locked up is really hard, but some people (such as yourself) make the most of it by taking the time to reflect on their life, their priorities, and what they want in the future. In your writing, you paint a picture of a young man with a happy and balanced life. A young man who wants to help others, who is willing to put in the hard work and discipline that sports and college require. This can and will be your life, if you stay out of trouble and keep your goals in mind. It won't always be easy, but you can do it.

Change My Life

Doin' the crime but not doing the time. I have not always got caught. I just be stupid and do something else. But yeah I'm tryin' to change my life, because bein' in jail ain't cool. When I get out I'm gonna get a job and get a car. I'm gonna go to adult school and then go to college. I want to be a Teacher. I don't know what kind of study is that. I just want to be a teacher.

-Donte

From The Beat: When you think about it, good teaching is the best job there is because you are making people stronger, smarter, better - you're giving to the next generation, your passing on your wisdom and knowledge, you're a role model for the people who will take over in the future.

Déjà vu: The Beat!

Funny how déjà vu works. I've had a déjà vue that I would be locked up and look at me now. Locked up, writing to the Beat.

That's some shhh, to have a dream of being in Juvenile Hall and then to actually end up here! There was a specific moment in Juvy that I had a déjà vu about though. Not just the idea of being in here - a specific moment. That I will not discuss, though it happened already.

-Gt

From The Beat: This is the first time anyone's written about having déjà vu about The Beat before. We'd rather see you writing to The Beat Without, telling us how successful you've become and setting an example for the other people to read and grow from.

I Didn't Do It

Being locked up for something you didn't do. This is my problem that I'm locked up for. It seems as if the one that says they have your back, they really don't have your back. I'm saying this because you and a friend can get locked up and he say he's gone take the rap. Then he turned around and blamed everything on you. So all I'm trying to get to readers is that you can't trust no one. Also remember be to your own self.

-Reginald

From The Beat: You have given your fellow Beat readers some wise advice! We are sorry you had to learn this lesson the hard way. When you get out, remember your own words.

I Have Learned

My name is Tajma and I am in here for domestic violence. My girl and I got into an argument and I kind of lost my cool and put my hands on her, but I never hit her. We get into a lot of arguments but this one got a little bit out of hand because we were in public.

It is my first time ever being in here and, from my point of view, it is the worst place besides real jail or dead. I've learned a hell of a lot from this experience and never want to get in trouble and come back to this place ever again.

Things that I have learned is to not put your hands on females no matter what, and if you get mad at her, then turn around and run. The main thing I learned from this whole experience is to always think before you act because if you don't, then it will get you put behind bars when all you had to do was think before you act on what you did.

-Tajma

From The Beat: It sounds like you have had some time to reflect on your crime and to think about strategies for managing your anger on the outs. Fights definitely are part of being a couple, but it's all about how you handle them. Are you and your girl still together? Do you think she expects things to be different when you get out? Do you think she is afraid, after what happened? It takes courage to write about this subject, and we are here for you if you want to explore it some more in your writing.

Coincidence

I have a good example. Like for instance, one day in juvenile hall I was experiencing a weird feeling like someone close to me was going through something. My stomach was crunching and my fingers was twitching. Come to find out that my bro was sentenced to 20 years in jail. How I found out: I called home and my mom told me. I don't know if it was cause it was my bro, but it was a gut feeling.

I had also found out that my lil cousin was jumped. He wasn't hurt but it still was the fact that I had a feeling about something.

-Anthony

From The Beat: First of all, we are so sorry to hear about your brother's sentencing. We understand that this must be a very difficult time for you, your mom, and your whole family. Our hearts go out to you. Family members are connected in very intimate and mysterious ways, no doubt. Especially siblings. Sounds like you are very tuned in to your mind and body this way.

Never Running Again

My exit strategy is to go to camp and really try to get my GED because deep down inside I feel like if I don't do it at camp, I will never do it.

I ran from camp and they are letting me come back. To others it's like me going back to camp is little or nothing, but to me it is a second chance at getting my life together!

-Jacob

From The Beat: Make the best of this second chance. The Beat comes up to camp too, and we're going to hold you to this promise, because it's a promise made to the most important person there is: Yourself.

Déjà vu Experience

Yes, I've experienced Déjà vu. When I was out I was daydreaming, well, taking a nap and I was dreaming that I ran into this female and she liked me. So we started talking about going to the movies to go and see "Happy Feet". So, we went to the movie and we had a good time. She was wearing a nice red-and-white outfit. So like the follow week I ran into this girl. Her name was Linda, and when I was realizing what was happening then it hit me: I've met this girl before! It was crazy how it happen. Then that's when I realized it was Déjà vu.

-Lil' Allen

From The Beat: Wow! Déjà vu is such a weird feeling, isn't it?

Doing The Crime, But Not Doing the Time

I really feel that it's not effective to have people locked up. Why throw someone in a cage like an animal? Putting people in cages makes someone want to get out like some type of animal. If you're put in this type of situation and environment it changes your whole mindset. Even if you're not a criminal but you're around all these other people in jail that are criminals, you will start to pick up criminal characteristics and eventually personify yourself as a criminal. Now I do agree that jail makes you think twice about doing crimes, but I would never say it changes people. No one can change another person because if someone want to change, they have to take the initiative to change themselves. And another consequence instead of jail could be earlier curfew or privileges being taken away.

- Positive Chris

From The Beat: When the system only cares about "housing" an inmate, controlling their behavior 24 hours a day, and there is no effort made to teach new coping mechanisms, job skills, or ways of thinking, the person eventually labels himself as a "criminal". It's sad, because it's kind of letting the system win and define who you are. The truth is, you have a whole lifetime ahead of you to decide who you want to be. Already, you are a good writer and communicator, and you ask questions about the environment around you. These are gifts that may lead you to wonderful opportunities in your life. Then there is the other part of your piece, about the responsibility each of us has to change our behavior when we are on a wrong path

Déjà vu on the Courts

I remember I was in the car one night, chillin' with my friends, and my friend Kyle's dad had called. Earlier that night, Kyle's dad had went to a college basketball game and he was explaining to him how the game ended.

So, Kyle had put his dad on speaker and let us hear it too. He said that it was 12 seconds left and the team was losing by five points, then they scored 2 points with six seconds left and called a time out. The next possession, he got a steal, and had time to win it with a three pointer.

Then as a player shot the ball, he made it at the buzzer, but the ref called it a two-pointer 'cause his foot was on the line. So they ended up losing the game.

After he hung up with his dad I told him I remembered his Dad telling us that exact same story.

-Terrell

From The Beat: Great details on this sports play-by-play. We've definitely experienced what you're talking about - it's hard to prove, almost impossible to describe, but like all the Great Mysteries, equally impossible to deny!

What's Up Beat

What's up Beat? I'm just sitting here. My PO finally came seen me, still talking bullshhhh, gets me hecka mad telling me "why I ran from my group home?" and I told him my mom is very sick wit' hepatitis C and it seems like he didn't care, he don't care about what happens to me or my mom as long as he get paid. But it's alright. Wherever he sends me, I'll pump it and go see my family and show them all I got to do is want it. Feel me, Beat? Well thanks, Beat, again. Well, until paper meet pen.

-Raskal

From The Beat: It may seem like he doesn't care when he tells you that you have to go to a group home and finish out your time, but the truth is, he's right: you have to do this! Unless you want to keep getting locked up over and over again, you have to go where he sends you and finish this thing right. It's the best thing for your mom, too. She doesn't want to see you take risks to come see her, get caught, and get locked up again. She wants to see you get out of the system and make a clean start. Then you can be there for her and help her out. Running away isn't helping anyone.



I've Done This Before

One day I was sitting on the corner. Me and my potnaz and some of the OG's were out there posted when out of nowhere we seen a lot of girls coming our way. From a distance, I thought I had seen one of them before, so as they got closer, everybody tried to talk to them. It was a light-skin bad one I tried to talk to. As she told me her name, something went through my head that I tried to talk to her before. And it was the same people out there before. It was kind a little different cause the last time I tried to talk to her she didn't give me her number and this time she gave me her number. And that was my experience with Déjà vu.

-Lil Rob

From The Beat: Sounds like luck was with you the second time around!

Déjà vu

I feel that every time I see a familiar face,
when I hear a familiar phrase, smell, taste,
when the cops give chase
and I increase the pace.
I feel Déjà vu.

My memory is shot, so I feel with my gut
they tell me I'm wrong but then it comes back
this the cat that almost got me wacked for a sack
so of course I smash

later find out it's his brother, same mother and all
but is it really my fault he had to fall?

Naw.

Chalk it just another lost child in a world with no cause.

-Capone

From The Beat: This poem is bone-chilling... did it really happen? Whether it did, or whether it is just the invention of your poetic imagination, thank you for this lean, dramatic piece about déjà vu.

Déjà vu

I had déjà vu before. One day I had got kicked out of school and my mama had to go the school for a meeting with the principal.

When we left the office, the school police officer told my mom that I was a good kid but I didn't think I was 'cause I was hard-headed.

When we left my mom took me to Hayward to the scooter shop to get a spark plug for my go-ped.

When we got home, she told me not to leave the block just go to the corner and come back 'cause I was in trouble and I couldn't ride it so when I got on it I got to the corner and I made a left turn. I was riding and I look at my phone to see what time it was and school was getting out in a few minutes so I started to go tours the school to show off.

When I got few feet away from the light I had déjà vu that I was bout to get hit by a car and soon as I got to the right and made the turn the light turned red and the cars start going. The next thing I knew was that I got hit by an off duty police officer in a normal car. I broke my elbow and was in a lot of pain.

Like two minute after that school got out and everybody was just looking then I called my mom we went to the Children's Hospital to get a x-ray then they told me to come back in three days to get a cast for my left elbow.

-Young T

From The Beat: Oh no! We bet you were wishing you had listened to your mom. Glad to hear the accident wasn't any worse than it was. It must have been very painful!

College Life

College is going to be the best thing that's going to happen in my life. My mind has a million goals such as becoming an FBI agent and also becoming a fire fighter and an EMT. This is more then imagination: college has a good study in sociology and behavior programs.

I would like to live in Hollywood or somewhere in LA or DC. The possibility of seeing things brings joy in my life. To understand me or my way of doing things you must see my point of view of life. My life is more than just looking ahead of things. It is putting your priorities in order. But why I'm sitting here? The intelligence is there.

-Jermaine

From The Beat: The key is planning for your future, which you're doing right now. It sounds like you have a strong interest in helping other people and a strong desire to go to college. Now, the thing you have to do is plan how you will get there. This involves, a) staying in school and getting decent grades b) avoiding trouble and not getting sent back to juvenile hall and c) seeking out a mentor. You've got your priorities in order... now get busy making your dreams a reality.

Why We Do What We Do

Anytime you get arrested and come to the hall they always asking you the same-ass question like "Why you back?" or "Why you keep doing the same stuff?" but they fail to realize that's all we know. We wasn't around nothing else but the hood, you feel me, all we know is hustling. That's how we was raised - to go get it. Ain't nobody just gone give you nothing for free, you feel, so shhh you hustle for it, that's all we know.

We grew up listening and looking up to O-G's and older youngstas, we ain't have no male guidance, half of us is our daddy, so shhh ain't too much else to do but get money. So maybe y'all should think twice about asking us why we here and why we keep coming back. Shh come live in our world for a couple of days. I bet yo' ass end up in here sooner or later.

-Paul

From The Beat: As a realist and an intelligent young person, you look at society and the ways it has failed you, but then what? Does a youngster allow himself to be a victim of poverty, of racism, of growing up in the hood forever? Is that all that defines him? Does he give up and settle in to life in jail? Or does he look at society, the things that cause him and his family pain, and decide to do something about it?

Crime and Time

To me, if you do the crime, you should be able to do the time. To some people the time they did doesn't really matter. Somebody like me, I'm a real money-getter so I do the time. I've been here like seven times and it really didn't affect me.

But anyways, if I was in charge, I would lock somebody up for like six to nine months their first time so they'll know that it's not cool to be breaking the laws out there. To y'all kids there if you can't do the time don't do the crime! I'm out.

-The Fly Kid

From The Beat: Wait, we're confused. You're saying you would do another crime to get back into jail? You're giving us some mixed messages.



System Making Money Off the Juveniles

Doing the crime but not the time is something that I know young people today that are in Alameda County Juvenile Hall think about always, but as for myself, my view is that the county has outrageous sentences for the dumbest things. Basically, I'm saying the judicial system is just plain B.S. I say that because I am in here for the most petty of crimes, the very bottom of the list. Can you guess what it is...disturbing the peace.

Well, before you get all defensive, let me tell you how long I been in Juvenile Hall. I been here for several weeks which is just seeming to increase but, I also do feel that if you do the crime you must do the time but jail for disturbing the peace is just unnecessary.

I could have easily been assigned community service and that could have been cruel enough punishment considering the crime that I committed. Which is proof that the jail system just wants you because the high amounts of money that they make off you!!

-Michael

From The Beat: Thanks for your point of view. You're right: the system employs a lot of people, and other people profit from construction contracts for new prisons and juvenile halls. There is certainly a profit-driven side to prisons and juvenile facilities, even though they are run by state, county and federal governments (do you think governments are non-profit institutions?) If you feel strongly about this issue, do what you can to stay out of trouble, do an internet search to learn more about prisons and profits, educate others about your experience, and maybe stay involved with The Beat by writing to us from the outs, or volunteering for The Beat or another organization that works with incarcerated youth.

SANTA CRUZ

Coincidence

I remember this one time when I was leaving my house to do some things in the streets and to go get some yesca, but before I left the house my mom told me not to leave because she had a bad feeling, and my dad also said that something bad was going to happen.

I told them not to trip, that nothing bad was going to happen, and I left. Everything was going firme. I had a couple of pistos with homeboy. And after that we went to get some yesca. But no one answered their phones. So we waited. But before we got that jale, me and homeboy ended up fighting with some fools, and both of us got stuck. Ain't that some crap. Alratos.

-M

From The Beat: We don't understand how that stuff works, but we know it's sometimes best to listen to strong voices like that. In this case, it was a painful lesson. So next time, listen to your parents and stay away from the drink and smoke! Get it?

I'm going to try my best, because I know that as soon as the homies know I'm out — they're gonna be like — "let's get high".

Family First

My exit strategy is to be with my family more than I used to.

I also want to kick it with the homies, but when stuff goes down, I want to be smart about it, so I won't get back in here. Honestly, I'm thinking to stay clean, but I just don't know if I can. But I'm going to try my best, because I know that as soon as the homies know I'm out — they're gonna be like — "let's get high". But I just have to learn how to say no to the temptations.

-Jose

From The Beat: Yes, you do. And maybe you need help learning how to say no. It's the smart thing to do — asking for help when you need it.

What Exit Strategy?

I do have an exit strategy. I have a couple of plans for this strategy. One is to stay home a little more. Another is to stop getting high and drunk as much. Another would be to control my temper. A final strategy would be to think twice when I feel like doing something stupid.

-Julian

From The Beat: How about staying home a lot more. How about not getting drunk, or high, at all. Those are better plans, we think. But we like your "think twice" strategy.

Doing The Crime

Well if your down to do the crime you better be down to do the time 'cause that's what you should be thinking about before you do whatever you do.

-Oso

From The Beat: And you? What are you thinking about so you don't fall into the trap once again?

Thank You, Allan

This quick piece goes to my friend Allan Martinez. Hey thanks for giving me the inspiration and the advice to change... and ¡Arriba Nicaragua and Mexico, que no! This is from your good friend Josue.

-Josue

From The Beat: It's so nice to read that Allan has inspired you. So, what has he inspired you to do?

Off To The Island!

If it was up to me I say we just let everyone that's doing life or a minimum of fifteen years be sent to a specific island. On this island they can kill each other and what not. It could be one big hood for every one. I think if people are real gang members and are down and ready to die for what they believe in then they wouldn't be scared to go.

I think it's better to put them all on an island instead of a six-by-nine-cell. There's no point in it except that it wastes money and it helps them get institutionalized. This makes them want to live in the system.

That's what I think, yet it will probably never happen.

-Gahramani

From The Beat: Talk about chaos if your island was a reality for these alleged bad guys and gals, whoa! You are right, that there is plenty of money going to waste by housing and institutionalizing so many men and women in corrections.

College Is Key

In my life I have a few things bringing me down. For instance my hood, my boys and my older brother. But I'm not gonna get sucked down the same hole, I have a exit strategy.

First off I'm gonna get my GED while I'm locked up, so that when I get out I can go to a JC (junior college). I'm gonna take automotive classes and maybe some business classes too.

When I finish my two years at JC, I'm gonna become a certified technician.

From there I will stack bread for a few years then buy old school (cars) for cheap. Restore them and open up an old school (car) dealership. Unless, while at JC I play football and I get a scholarship to a UC, then I'll follow my dream.

I gotta find a way to exit the game, I can't let it suck me in I can't be the same, please God, send me a way out, all the drugs and gangs got me in a personal drought. If I don't exit I'll be like the rest, chillin' six feet under with bullets in my chest. I need someone to please show me the way, so I can sleep at night knowing I'll be OK. I want someone to give me the benefit, to showing me the way, in finding the exit.

-Conrad

From The Beat: Good for you in recognizing the problem and having a plan to improve your young life! Sounds to us like you can do this plan if need alone, but to have the support is huge. Talk to those whom you trust and want the best for you, we bet those people will be the support to help guide you on the right path. If you need our support, we encourage you to keep writing The Beat Within wherever you go! Now, capture your dreams!! We do hope if playing football is something you want to do, you'll give it a shot. Best to you!

Never Thought Of An Exit Strategy

Exit strategy... Well, I don't really have one, never gave it much thought. All I know is that if I don't finish this 18 month program, if I don't, I'm going to CYA. I am going to try to finish this program, but I know it is going to be pretty hard. I'm not one to listen. I like to do my own thing. I know, though, what I need to do, so I am going to see what happens.

If I do get out, I am going to stay low because when you are out of sight, you're out of people's mind.

-Most Vicious

From The Beat: If you haven't given an exit strategy much thought, it's about time that you do. You say you don't like to listen to others, but here you are, taking orders from strangers telling you everything to do. And if you don't make it here, you'll be going somewhere with even less freedom. If you can't listen to others, then start talking to yourself. Tell yourself what changes you need to make in order to be in a position where you don't have to listen to others, because you're telling yourself the right things to do.

Déjà Vu

I'm poetic

These rhymes to your head are like anesthetics.

Déjà vu

Like the color yellow mixed with blue

Make the color green.

Smoked marijuana then I had a dream

Saw a teen trapped in a box

Then I seen a closed building with plenty of locks,

Dirty underwear and stinky socks.

Walls were cold and hard like rocks.

I remember tick tock, tick tock, tick tock.

-Johnny

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a handle on what's not to like while in a place like this. How will you be able to awake from such a horrible nightmare? And do you think that when you finally do awake from that dream you have some sort of control over whether you will dream it again or not?

Woke Up This Morning

Today I woke up and told my roommate that I had a feeling I was going to another unit and earlier that day the staff said I was going to another unit.

-Johnny

From The Beat: That's Déjà vu for you.

A Poor Exit Strategy

I've been thinking of getting out to the outs and do good. I got some goals I'm not sayin I'm tryin to get out of my hood or nothing like that 'cause I don't think of ever doin' that.

Anyways what I've been thinking though is that I gotto start thinking smarter and make some right choices 'cause I'm startin' to have a family, you feel me! So I got some goals hopefully they work out.

I think the only way is for me to stay busy hopefully I get my job aback. My goals is to stay busy, try to stay home more, get my diploma and spend time with my family so maybe this goals will work out.

-B

From The Beat: Why would you not want to leave the negativity of the hood? Why stay stuck? This here is one poor choice! How is your little family/children going to feel when you make the hood the priority over them, and then you find yourself detained facing some time? Mature up!!

Family Photo

If I can hold one photo it would be of my family because I love them and without them I would go crazy not being able to see them.

-Steven

From The Beat: How you holding up without them now?

Think First!

My plans are when I get out maybe get a job that will keep me occupied from all the bad things I was doing before I came in. It's not cool to do those things because not only did I hurt myself but my mom and dad too.

I plan on never coming back in here again because it's not the place I want to be. It sucks being in your room half the day and having people telling you what to do everyday. Think before you do things because you always think about it after. Think before you do it.

-Pu

From The Beat: Yes indeed thinking first is huge! You already see what happened when you allowed yourself to follow and not think! Step up for the family and you!

A Photo Of My Girlfriend

To start this letter off I want to send my utmost love and respect to all incarcerated and to The Beat.

Well, one photo which I'd love to have right now is my girlfriend's because when I see her face it makes my day. I will keep her photo always by my side and right now it's hard for me to be happy because I haven't heard from her. I hope I hear from her soon. I know she loves me and I love her so much. My baby girl, Judy, is my "eye-candy."

Beat I want to just let you guys know that we thank you guys a lot and we love The Beat.

Good luck to all incarcerated and keep those photo because you never know when that person is gone! Well actually I do got a picture of my princess! Beat stay up and I wish my lady could read this I love you mammas!

-Julio

From The Beat: Hopefully this period will come to a close and you'll be responsible enough to move on from the life that brings you here. We hope things do work out with you and your girl, but if not, we know you will be strong enough to move on and live life right!

Déjà vu

Once it was a Saturday. We watched a movie called "Déjà vu" with Denzel Washington. Well my point is that some kid got in a fight right after the movie. The staff said someone would fight, and look what happened!

-Johnny

From The Beat: And the movie is called "Déjà vu."

Special Trust

If in the long run I could only carry one picture, the picture I would carry is a picture of my mom and little brothers 'cause they're the only ones I learned to trust.

-Grinch

From The Beat: Tell us about your family. Why are they the only ones you can trust? Who has lost your trust?

Waste Of Time

I've been down for a couple months and now I'm ready to go back home and make a change 'cause let me tell you being locked up ain't no place to be. I'm eighteen years old and I've been in the system since I was fifteen and I wish I never came here 'cause it's a waste of valuable time. So all I have to say is don't get yourself put in a situation where you don't want to be.

-Trouble

From the Beat: You say three years in the system has been a waste of time? Turn this situation into a positive and tell us what you have learned the past three years to help other not fall into the same traps?

A Photo Of My Cousin

Hey Beat what cracking? Well this is R, if I could have one photo it would be of my cousin. Me and him grew up together, and he's the one that named me and taught me everything I know now. If I could get a picture with him and my sis that day in the hills I would not care about anything. All I could see was just a smile on his face like he said "talk don't mean nothing until you do something." Well that all I got to say RIP I'm out.

-R

From The Beat: Photos are what we cling to when the person we care so much about is no longer here. RIP to your cousin. We are sorry for the loss. We hope his death will only inspire you to see beyond the life that brings incredible sadness and pain.

To God

Beginning, Delivery, Reproduce
Desire, passion, ambition, fondness
Adore, Care, Glorify, idolize, prize
Growth, endure, vital spark, breath
Evil, sinful, wrong, corrupt, degrade,
Decrease, departure, passing, afterlife, extinction

To God, this is to understand why we make mistakes in life that either come back to hurt us or not-

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Powerful piece to your God. Next time give us some examples, and we know you're capable too, to show us how these words can trip us up and cause mistakes.

I'll Do My Best

When I turned 18 I thought that it was like a new life for me to start any way I want... I was planning on being an upstanding member of society, and I had all the resources in place. All I had to do is walk the line...but it was harder than I thought...and I fell off. Anyway...it won't be easy to rebuild my reputation, but I'll do my best.

-L.K.

From The Beat: Do you believe there are ways in which falling off might happen no matter what we do? Do you think that maybe it's not the falling off that defines a person, but how a person gets back up and what he does once he's back up again?

My Exit Strategy Can't Miss

I do have an exit strategy and it is to get out of the hole that I put myself in. I will change the people that I hang around with because that is one of the biggest reasons that I'm in here. One of the biggest steps I have taken in here was to make a plan, a plan of what I will do to change my life, and change the purpose of why I'm living.

When I get out I will go back to school and take advantage of the free education that I am given. I will also go back to playing football, and back to making music.

My biggest goal that I have is to go to college and prove everyone that doesn't believe in me, and to the ones that don't think I'm gonna make it out there, an I'm just going to come back in here wrong!

Well time is running out so I gotta bounce. That ain't all my plan but Beat you guys got a little introduction to it, and to everyone locked up the only way to get out and not come back in is to have and make a plan and really follow through with it!!

"You cannot change the pass, but you can make the future."

-Believer

From The Beat: How did you get inside this hole of yours? How do you think these people will feel when you stop hanging with them? Regardless, you have to think of you and only you, not the people that keep you down. We have faith that you can get through this period and blossom into something very special! Keep us posted.

If I Could Go Back In Time

If I had the chance to go back and change all of the bad things that I did to get me here, I would change when I stole 22 bikes in one night. Then the next week I was selling them and I found a guy who wanted to buy seven bikes but as I was getting the money I just remember hearing the police say "Freeze asshole we got you now." I would change that so that I would not have stole those then I would not be sitting here today writing this for The Beat Within.

-Lil' Silent

From The Beat: Damn, that must've been the record for bike stealing in one night. Did all twenty-two people get their bikes back? Do you think you would still want to change if you wouldn't have got caught?

If I Could Go Back In Time

If I had the chance to go back in time I would make the right decision. I would stop drinking and smoking because that's what got me here, especially drinking. I use to do a lot of beer runs and now I'm regretting it, and I would make the decisions. I would make the right one, because now my sister writes to me crying because she misses me.

-Elmo

From The Beat: That's very insightful of you to realize what was making you slip. Do you think this could be a chance for you redirect where you're going? Are drugs and alcohol so much a part of your life right now that you have to have them?

Doing The Crime But Not Doing The Time

People say that they didn't do the crime and some people did do the crime. But the sentencing they be giving people is unnecessary, cause it might be your first time and you get that same conviction as the person that has been in there multiple times and I think that isn't fair. But who cares what a minor says anyways there not going to believe him/her.

They never listen to what we got to say to the Judge all they do is listen to is the probation officer, attorney and DA. It's really not fair to the minors that they are convicting but who wants to hear our side of our story. Nobody listens to us. But it doesn't matter, they always say why you do the crime like always but we don't care there is nothing we can do about that so it's whatever. Like they say don't do the crime if you can't do the time.

-Dumby Boy

From The Beat: You pointed out that it's not fair to give someone more time for the same crime committed as someone else. What do you think would be some solutions to that injustice? If they didn't give time, what do you think they should do? Do you think what you did deserves what you've been through while being incarcerated?

Coincidence, Déjà vu or ESP?

One day I went to my psychology class in college. I felt that I was expecting someone to approach me, then I kinda dozed off and I can just see the future for a bit. But then again I was probably just daydreaming of myself moving seats and getting out of class to use the restroom then get back to class and move my backpack to an empty seat and this girl moving to a seat next to mines.

Then I snapped out of it and I could feel that my bladder was troubling me so I got up and left class to use the restroom. When I got back I noticed the floor was dirty so I moved my backpack on an empty seat and then it got to me something weird was going on. I felt as if I was partially controlled so I submerged into a deep thinking mode, then a girl from class came to talk to me because she noticed me kind of just wandering off in my mind.

-Anonymous Viet

From The Beat: What you write is very cool. Sounds like you truly sensed what was going to happen and it did! Then what?

Too Many Déjà Vu's

I had déjà vu so many times I can't count anymore, like the time when I was on house arrest.

I was at school one day. When I got a call on my cellphone my boy needed help to fight these guys, but I'm on house arrest so I can't bounce from school, but I did it anyways.

I go there, get in a fight, stomp on them, then bounce but the school I went to fight those foes was the school I use to go until I got kicked out, so the staff knows who I am. Anyway I go to court the next day and my PO tells me I'm being arrested for failing EMP and for trespassing (on another school).

Well a couple years after the same stuff happens to me, I mean the same exact stuff I'm on house arrest I go to the same school for the same reason for my boy and a day after I'm back in juvenile hall saying to myself I think I seen this coming, déjà vu.

-Gustavo

From The Beat: You didn't learn the first time and you sure didn't learn the second time. What will happen the third time? Only you know what decision you will make. What's the plan upon getting out of juvenile? OK, appreciate the excellent on topic writing!

Exit Strategy

Orale what up beat the topic of this week is "Exit Strategy." The things that brought me in here were doing drugs, staying out and not calling in when I was on EMP and I knew I was gonna get locked up. So I went on the run because my birthday was coming up and I wasn't tryna spend that day in here neither, but let's skip the bullshhh and get back to the topic.

My strategy to stay out of here and not come back is do good. I'm getting put on EMP for 30 days and APA for a year and if I fail that that's ranch time and I ain't trying to do no 6 to 8 months. But the most important reasons is for my mom and my lady cause she's pregnant so now I gotta think about my unborn baby.

I'm trying to be out when my baby is born but I guess you can say that's a strategy but alright Beat I'm gone.

-R

From The Beat: When did you find out you have a baby on the way? It seems like an exit strategy from you should be more important since you have a baby who needs you on the way. Can you be aware that you can't just think about yourself anymore? What will you put first, your homies or your baby?

My Own Control

My own control
Is what I have for a goal
To set my mind free
And just let me be!

Daydreaming about my one and only
Thinking about the way he should hold me!
Together in my own little world
Has his mind set on his baby girl!

Loving him until the end
My life is never pretend

Laying on my bunk
Until I hear a staff say all this junk!

Waking up from this day dream
About my lubby dubby and me!

-Tenesha

From The Beat: To get back in your lubby dubby's arms, what will it take to stay there? What's the plan to stay free?

Doing The Crime But Not Doing The Time

Say like if someone did a crime and they're the kind of people that don't like to go to school and don't want to get their high school diploma. I would make them finish high school and get their diploma.

If they didn't do that I would make them help the city cleaning the parks cutting bushes and cutting grass and even cleaning and scrubbing toilets. When they were finished I would make them go home on house arrest, which is E.M.P. so they couldn't leave the house at all.

-P-Nut

From The Beat: Do you know what the actual term for what you described is? It's called restorative justice where the penalty of a crime is to do something to help restore your community. And those are great examples of that. If someone robbed you and got caught for it, would you be okay with that person cleaning parks as the penalty?

Five Days Feels Like Five Years

Here I am sitting in a cell,
don't got no one to talk to
have not even got a piece of mail.

I only been in here five days but it feels like five years.
I was told that God would not put more on you than you
can bear.

I feel like I'm gonna be in here a long time that's my main
fear.

All I could do is think about all I have done.

I can't believe I was that drunk.

I made many mistakes but none that altered my life.
I never thought that in court for my life I would have to
fight.

I regret every stupid decision I made.

I wish that night I could replay.

But I can't now I feel all alone and I just pray I could go
home.

-Hazard

From The Beat: Sadly what's done is done, and now you can only build from this point on. Use this awful mistake as a starting point towards a better life. Keep us posted!

Before It's Too Late

Have you ever experienced danger or the feeling that you've been there before, and you know how it's going to end? Have you seen things in your day or night dreams that later came true? Have you ever felt something was going to happen — good or bad — and then it did? So tell us of a time when one of those unusual and unexplainable events happened to you.

U think the world going to end one day and people just don't know when it going to end so that why I thank god for keeping me on this earth every day and the past is going to pass you before your eyes and you need to change before it is too late.

-Young Chetter Chaser

From The Beat: To be grateful to see each day very honorable of you. However aren't there other things to be grateful for in your life too? Are you one that can take your own advice? For we feel like the wise words you said at the end of your piece, if put to practice, can carry someone a long way. Are you that someone?

Exit Strategy

I want to look for a job when I get out. I plan to stay away from places I think I'll see someone I don't get along with so I don't fight again. I want to go to school so I can do something good with my life. I plan to get counseling so I don't do drugs.

-Something Good

From The Beat: This shows a good deal of maturity and thought, so we hope it's not just a few words on a page, but something you truly take to heart. It's a wise decision to get help with your drug problem, and to find a support group of people who've been where you are. One day at a time!

Hey Mama

Hey Mama I see that look in your eyes

You tryna hide it by disguise

But you gotta know one thing

I'm on the grind tryin' to make it to the top

And guess what, I did it for you

'cause I love you

Hey, Ma, how you doin'? This ya son

I know you not proud of a lot of stuff that I've done

I know you wish me better, yeah I know that

Know this the moment of the year, call it a Kodak

Want you to know that I made it to the top

People tried to hate, but the grind didn't stop

You was worried about me on these streets

Now I'm on the mic' makin' a killin' on these beats

Yo' baby boy grown up now

I made it through the struggle, I hope I made you
proud

And I ask God why

Man I can't even lie

All them times I was gone I was chasing paper

But now I gotta better way to thank you

-Filthy

From The Beat: There are some things here we don't quite understand. You ask your mother if she's proud of you because you've "made it through the struggle," but we know the best gift you could give your mother is yourself, at home with her, and not locked up away from her. So is this a declaration, a commitment to the kind of change you're planning when you get out of here? If that's the case, if you plan to walk a new path that leads away from these streets that cause your mom such worry, then you really are giving her a gift that she can be proud of.

Prevented

I once experienced that I was dead by getting stabbed and shot but that was in my dreams that I went through over night. It was fear and worry that I woke up with that morning. Knowing and being precautious was the only thing I know of. For some reason I had a feeling that I was going to have to go through this dream but for some other reason I felt that I did prevent this occurring also.

In other words, I backed off to participate in some parties or with homies going to the street. Well that's about it but I had a strong feeling that I prevented this happening.

-Chueco

From The Beat: That's one of those weird and almost indescribable situations. Has this ever happened to you before? Do you feel like you could prevent other things in your life that you had dreamed about? It's crazy how one can prevent things that happened in his dreams, but sometimes we can't do that with our own realities...

Mom Is My Personal Exit Strategy

Well my personal exit strategy is my Mom. I mean the whole reason I was doin' so good is because my mom wanted me to have a good life. She had me under strict discipline, and I liked the taste of freedom. It got to the point where the homies would be waiting after school with a forties and I turned them down because I wanted to prove to my mom and myself that I had changed, but this crime came from my past to bite me in the ass.

Not to be getting off topic my exit strategy is my mom, and I am sorry that she had to pay for a crime i did. I love you Momma, see you soon.

-G

From The Beat: The past has crept up on you and hopefully it won't pull you back into the life. You and mom will reunite soon enough. Stay focused and determine to live a life away from the drama!

Big Plans

Well Beat, my plans for when I get out are very interesting. First of all, get my GED to go to college and become a social worker. 'Till then, I'm gonna work at a TV company (I got the job waiting for me) also go to my counseling program, go thru with my probation.

The second best part, make it big with my boy Javier. I work with him at the studio and we got an album coming out soon. I am part of the "Savage Living" crew (record label) and I love going out with them and doing club promotions. I guarantee I am going to be at the top in a few years from now. Remember my name.

-Laura

From The Beat: Remember The Beat too! WE wish yo uthe best with your dream. We hope your plans are a success!

I Will Miss You

I will always miss you
I will always care about you
Even though it seems like life ain't being fair.
It was too soon to say good-bye
But here comes a time when we must die.
And I'm now sorry for not letting you know
That I wasn't ready to let you go.
Now every night I get on my knees and ask God...
Why is life gotta be so hard?

Especially dedicated to
My Mommy and my Uncle

-Diana

From The Beat: Tell us more about your loving Mommy and your uncle. Thanks for the poetic tribute.

Thoughts

Thoughts flow through my head like clouds on a
windy bay,
now that I'm in a cell by myself I have nothing but
silence and the voice in my head.
It's funny I love to read and while I've been reading
lately I start to think and drift
into meditative thought. I can never stay on one topic
for long.
Once I come to the conclusion, answer or end of a
thought
I go straight to the next and there's no telling where
the wind will blow me next.

-Sjb

From The Beat: Excellent on-topic piece that is so revealing of the power of thoughts. What are your thoughts of the system? What are your thoughts of living free of juvenile?

Exit

My plan to exit my lifestyle of drugs and drinking forties in the tennis courts and seeing things that aren't really there is over. My exit strategy is Advent or rehab and I'll be leaving on the 29th. I'm happy to be leaving. They say, "Every end begins with a start."

I want to thank my counselor Mr. Bautista for everything, he was the bomb! He would talk to me and give me advice to use in the real world I just have one question, "Can a blind man dream...?" Think about it. Stay up! Don't let nothing mess up your programs! Be cool.

-Lil' Wyno

From The Beat: So going to Advent or rehab is just the beginning of your exit plan, right? Are there things that might stand in the way of your exit plan? And if so, do you have a plan in place when these obstacles come into play?

A Dream

I once had a dream that I stole a car and that I took it to school and it was Friday. My friend told me to let him borrow it and I told him okay. So he took it and then he came back, but with another car and he said to keep it because the one that I let him borrow got left over there. So then I went home with the car and when I was parking it somebody passed by and looked at me funny. Then I went home and I woke up. Then it really happened to me on the next day. Later until next time.

-Monstro

From The Beat: This is an almost unbelievable story. A lot of us see things that may happen in the future in our dreams, but for all of that to happen is amazing. What do you think was going to happen to you after that person passed by and looked at you funny? What happened the next day?

Well the past screwed me over!

I was doing so good and now look what happened!
Back here! It's all good though,
because like they say I did the crime now I'm bout to do the time.
But don't get me wrong I don't want to be here...who does?
Well you know when you're locked up, you get out and taste freedom,
then you get locked up out of nowhere, so now I'm back...
I guess I'm writing to get this shhh off my mind, I just can't believe I'm back,
when I had told myself it wasn't going to happen.

-Bashful

From The Beat: You have had time to think about your mistakes now, so what was the core problem as to why you are back in the hall?

A Bad Dream

Damn have you ever had a dream of a person in your life that you didn't like and saw something bad happen to them! Basically what I'm trying to say is it happened to me!

I always had dreams of fighting this girl I hated with the passion, really I don't even know why, she's just one of those girls I didn't like! But in my dreams it was hella evil like I really went off on her! I always thought when that day came I was gonna get my ass beat!

I never thought I was going to, although I did, I went off on her like how I seen in my dreams, but not as bad, but bad enough to be in here! And now I don't think it was worth it and it all started with just a dream...a bad dream!

-Gigg

From The Beat: That's one bad dream, that you made for whatever reason a reality. You dreamt of this fight, but you didn't think of the consequences. Use your head and keep your hands to yourself!

Prison Won't Help Me

Q-vole Beat? Well, as for me, just here chilling in the max unit.

This topic is good. Today I got sentenced three years and one strike. They should have instead given me some programs to help me out. Now I'll get more institutionalized and out of control. Point is I will be more of a peligroso (dangerous) person when I am released. I just hope the system sees what they are doing is wrong and makes better choices for us in the city of San Jo.

Sincerely,

-Dreamer

From The Beat: We're sorry you've been sentenced to three years behind walls. What kind of programs do you think would help you more than jail time? We hope you know that you don't have to come out a more dangerous person than you went in. Even if the system fails to help you, you can help yourself. What plans do you have to do that?

From The Beat: "An eye for an eye" Nice choice of words. It's one thing to steal from someone but when it happens to "the thief" he or she starts to look at thieving in a different light. We understand that New Mexico is now doing just that "public humiliation" with the DWI / DUI offenders in the Land of Enchantment, by putting their picture in the front page of the newspaper? With luck this will help to stop or at least lower the DWI / DUI cases in New Mexico.

Life

Living life to the fullest looking back with no regret
 Ever since I was a young buck, I've always been a threat
 Putting in work on a regular, each and everyday
 Hustlin' on the corner, and strugglin' to get paid
 Gangbanging on the streets with the homies we hella deep
 Creased down from head to toe, coming up out the hood
 Looking so sharp and fly, representing
 We smokin' blunts and drinking
 Sniffing coke, and getting loaded
 Doing it each and everyday when I'm out there getting paid
 And always with a jimmy, 'cause I'm steady getting laid
 Looking out for them fools 'cause they always quick to hate
 But I'm a heavy hitter, so please don't make no mistake
 'Cause if you get caught slippin' I'm now hesitant to make you pay
 You should always mark my words, 'cause I never say shhh just to say!
 I always hold a grudge, I never let shhh go
 I'm a fearless individual in case you didn't know!
 But I'm intelligent as can be, I don't know not what I do
 I chose my actions carefully like those decision to be
 'Cause this world is full of misery, anger, violence, and we're all deceived
 Pointing fingers and blaming others, others meaning "us"
 But are we really the ones to blame?
 When the government and society are the ones putting us to shame
 We're not the ones who make the rules or choose to live the way we do
 It's already set before we're born, the white mans written destiny for us
 While we're living in the ghetto, the name of the concentration camps, in
 Germany
 during the holocaust
 Or in different sets and projects like they're watching and experimenting
 what we do and how we live
 We really think we're doing something, being leaders and calling shots
 Haha that's a laugh, this shhh I speak of is over our heads
 it's too big for an ordinary man to understand
 This thing goes way back to the beginning and becoming of THE MAN
 From the masons, like George Washington on the dollar bill, but if you look
 close enough historical evidence is revealed
 People think they know it all but really they know nothing!
 Ignorance and stupidity is all they really know
 Illuminating darkness and spiritual, evil is spread around the world
 We're put to sleep by the media, the music, even by what we eat.
 We're told how to act and how to live even how to think
 For example television, break it up and what do you get?
 Somebody telling you a vision on how to live, and how to die
 Don't you get it, it's all a lie!
 Take a second and think about it, what do you got to lose?
 We're already LOST AND BLIND unless we work together and a make a
 difference
 Look back in time to those who knew and tried to change it different people and
 different groups
 Like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, JFK, the Black Panthers and the Brown
 Berets
 along with so many more
 They all acted simultaneously an embolism is what they called it and another
 one is yet to come
 What will happen only God knows, we must succeed where the one before us
 failed
 We must peel our eyes and wake up from this nightmare
 But like I said before this is way bigger then you and me
 So I don't expect you to understand
 Because this is all covered up, and blocked out by THE MAN.

-Speedy

From The Beat: You have no regret falling prey to the system? You have no regret missing out on the fine things in life? Why? You pollute your brain and then get wrapped up, this is living? How and why did it get to this point? How can you personally blame others, even the government for your choices? The government didn't tell you not to go to school, or to use drugs, did they? What's the lie? And why only a few of you fall for the lie if the system is a joke? Most of us are free living healthy, and fulfilling our dreams. Now tell us readers what will it take for you to live

My Time, Or Not?

Well first of all I kind of think that time is effective in changing people's behavior. It can be a good change or bad change. Some people get out of jail and become smarter criminals, some turns their life around. It's like a wake up call.

For the rest of them who don't change in time, their wake up call will be something close to death or 25 to life.

Also when you get time for your crime its just discipline and I accept that 100%. Like in Proverbs, "Those who like discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates teaching is stupid." So I just take this as a wake up call, not the end of my life, 'cause the saying is "humility comes before honor."

-Fua'amotu King

From The Beat: So is this your time to think change? What did it take for you? What kind of knowledge have you obtained since you came to the hall? Who do you credit this awakening to? If you are ready to turn the

Exit Strategy

To get out of this two-year hell hole I have to do right. Do right by my family, by coming home and getting off of drugs.

This is a big one, I have been on meth for two years straight and noticing the way I act to the people that love me is very disgusting, the way my body looked after not being able to eat for months on end. Plus the way my whole body was tired, felt like I was carrying around 1000 pound weights on my back. The way my eyes and ears would play tricks on me and me reacting very strongly.

My plan to keep myself from the long night, only weighing 110 pounds, is to get back with my family, try to get a job, and get my GED and just live a very simple life - a girl, a job, a car, a house, kids, not having to worry if I'm going to get high today is worth everything.

My family is the #1 reason I'm going to quit meth. I don't want them to see me on those long nights, and only weighing one-hundred-and-ten, I want to live a long simple life.

-X-Rated Usher

From The Beat: Good for you XRU! What was the breaking point? Did you family say something to you? Or was it you taking a good long look in the mirror? Can you envision yourself falling prey to meth again ,and then catching yourself? If that's the case what will you do? With that said, we strongly urge you to get a back-up plan and yet another back up plan! Better safe than sorry. You have a long road ahead of you, but given you want it, we bet good things will come from these recent choices, like being clean and sober!

Problems All over

There's problems all over

Other people all was

Trying to take over

They call you names

such as nigger, white boy, illegal alien

but the truth is that what they really doing is hating.

-Playboy

From The Beat: Who are these people you speak on? Absolutely, we have to constantly deal with various forms of hate, so good for you in

Déjà Vu Bad Day

When I did my crime on that day I had a feeling that the next day I'd get back up (here) 'cause the enemy of mine got caught by the police and he told him where I live so when I came out the house the police was right their waiting for me to take me to jai and I felt stupid for that, 'cause I shouldn't of just went to my friend's house, but I was too late so look at me now, I'm over here writing Beat Within about my life.

-Alb

From The Beat: Why did you commit the crime in the first place? We know it wasn't worth it, so why did you put your freedom on the line? Why do the things that add stress to one's life? Life is complicated already without putting more problems on top of problems. What's the plan upon leaving the system? Have one yet?

My Mind

What's on my mind this time is why hella homeboys will be there when you out and you know they got you. But when you up in here they can't even take 10 damn minutes and write the homie. That's why when I'm up outta here I'm still be in the hood postin up with the homies but when it come to it I'm rolling with my main partner and if not, all by damn self. Don't get it twisted, I still got the homies fo' sure, but being bolo will make me less hot and give me a better chance at staying out and not coming back. It ain't no thang though.

-Solo

From The Beat: Good question. Can we ask were you are writer when you were free? Sure it takes ten minutes to drop a note, but all of us struggle when it comes to finding a few minutes to say hello, and we are not all homies. As for you still putting yourself out there on the block with the homies, well, we hope you are getting smarter about it, but, then again, it sounds like you can't cut the ties or don't want to, so you're willing to throw freedom away. So when do you ride solo or

Déjà Vu

I experience déjà vu
 regularly

At night I experience déjà vu
 unexpectedly

In dreams I experience déjà vu
 instantly

Everyday I experience déjà vu
 inadvertently

We all experience déjà vu
 inconceivably

But the difference between me and you
 Is that I make my déjà vu
 come true
 effortlessly.

-Ton Amour

From The Beat: Sweet. Nice poem.

I'm Tired

I'm tired of everybody speakin' on my name
 People bringin' up my past when they see that I've changed
 Tired of goin' to funerals every two weeks
 'Cause somebody close to me got caught up in the beef
 Tired of walkin' in court knowin' all they see is my black face
 Instead of looking at my case they quick to judge by race
 Tired of coming back in here disappointing family and friends
 They be like, "Damn! Reesie got locked again."
 Tired of worryin' if people in my life really care
 'Cause I'm dwellin' on the past, looked up and they wasn't there
 Tired of readin' lips when people be whisperin'
 'Cause I know they talkin' 'bout me and they know I'm listenin'
 Tired of wonderin' if I'll ever find somebody that's faithful
 When that day comes, I know I'll be thankful
 Tired of bein' tired so I expect the least, hope for the best
 'Cause with that mentality nothing can hurt me, forget the rest

-Reesie Cupz

From The Beat: There is a lot of meat here for us to chew on. You're tired of the system treating you like you don't count and you're tired of yourself giving them the power to do it. When you wonder if you'll ever find someone "that's faithful," do you include yourself in that wonder? Are you faithful to you? How much do your own choices contribute to your being so tired? If you "expect the least," that is what you will find. Stop expecting so little of yourself, and stop worrying what others think of you. Start thinking the best of yourself and expecting the best from yourself. If you do that, we think you'll get a new burst of energy, and the rest will fall into place.

Used To Be

I used to be the good girl when people said my name
 But now when people talk about me it's "Damn that girl has changed."
 Went from skatin' through the park to scrapin' through the Vill
 On the run poppin' pills, surprised I ain't been killed
 Started goin' to Carlmont and got a clean slate
 So I'm walkin' through the halls with a smile on my face
 Couple months later me and this girl start fussin'
 After school comes and damn, gave her a concussion
 Sittin' in my room thinkin' why did I do it
 Now I gotta do time and I'm tryna get through it
 I can't be mad at nobody but myself
 But now I wanna stop and ask somebody for some help
 I was on the run scared when I saw the police
 In the middle of the night still roamin' in the street
 Almost got raped on my first thizz night
 Had me thinking to myself, "Reesie, this aint right."
 After that happened, I had to take a stand
 But I feel and now I'm here... All I need is one more chance.

-Reesie Cupz

From The Beat: If you got that "one more chance" you're wishing for, can you tell us the specific changes you plan to make in your life. The only reason for new chances is to do things differently than in the past since we all know the same behavior leads to the same consequences. When you say you want to ask somebody for help, what is

No Time! Spiders Instead

Instead of doing time, I think we should have to put up with something that we're scared of. For example, I can't stand spiders. So if instead of coming here and having to wear these clothes and be stuck in my room. I would have to be in a room of tarantulas or something.... I don't know! But if you really think about it... everybody is scared of something. And if they're not, then there's something that they wouldn't do for anything. Like the type of stuff they do on fear factor.

It might sound stupid, but once you've been here and seen what's like, you think, "Okay, that wasn't that bad," or "Damn, I ain't goin' back!" And I think that 90% of the people that say that come back... Yes I'm one of them.

-Reesie Cupz

From The Beat: No, this doesn't sound stupid at all. In fact, there are governments of many countries that operate on the basis of fear as a tool of control. (Even our government tries to frighten people into supporting war based on fear.) Have you ever read the book, "1984" by George Orwell? If not, we recommend it. It is one of the best literary examples we can think of that creates a world where the kind of fear you describe (like the fear of spiders) is at its core. Maybe you could write your own story, a kind of "what if" based on your theory. We would love to read it.

I Deserve Honesty And Respect.

I deserve honesty and respect because I'm honest with people and show respect. If I get disrespected, then I'm gonna disrespect them even worse. I feel you deserve what you give. So if I'm honest and respectful, I expect to get it in return.

-Bubbles

From The Beat: We don't blame you for wanting the respect and honesty you give. But what does returning disrespect with even greater disrespect do, for you or for the person who disrespected you? Are there other ways to teach respect

Whales

I believe that people do care more about whales because it's not every day that a whale gets stuck at a surface of a beach. So people get all excited and try to help the whales any way they can. Sometimes I feel like I'm my mother's whale because she is always there for me, trying to help me any way she can. She's always cheering me up. Helping me with the problems I have. I feel glad about that.

-Albert

From The Beat: You are lucky to have a mother who stands by you and helps you when you need it. We love the idea that you sometimes feel like your mother's whale. What a very sweet thing to say!

Going Through It

Wow, I'm going through it right now! I'm hella mad that I'm even in here! I've been trying so hard to stay outta trouble and do the right thing, and then I get put back in here for somethin' so stupid. I get through so many obstacles every day, and it seems no one notices how good I'm doing. But they're quick to jump on me when the slightest thing doesn't go the way the system wants.
 I have so many other things going on in my life, such as boyfriend problems, family problems, stress, friends dying and I still stay strong. And I'm glad I know that, but I just wish someone else would point out that they notice.

-Bubbles

From The Beat: It's hard sometimes only to be recognized when we do negative things, as if none of the positive things count. That's when you have to know in your own heart and mind that they do count, and that regardless of what others notice or don't notice, you know the value of your accomplishments. We don't know what "stupid" thing you did to get put back here, but anything that leads to you giving up your freedom is not too smart, in our view. So keep doing those things that you're proud of, and stop doing those things you're not,

Hold On

My pain hurts like child birth
 Whom heels slow you just don't know
 At times I don't know what to say
 And all I do is pray day to day
 I feel my strength might die
 Like right now I'm trying hard not to cry
 Even though it's been two months
 But damn I still see it, I just don't believe it
 At time I bury like the cemetery
 Unworthy people playing beneficiaries
 A lot people speaking on one girl death
 Don't you worry "Nish" I'ma ride to my last breath
 You killers cause a lot of devastation
 You have no idea what you did to this nation
 I really hate you, excuse my frustration
 But just when I'm 'bout to quit, God tells me to
 just hold on Be strong... Things are gonna get better
 Rest in peace cousin Nish

-Mesey

From The Beat: Until we reached the very last line of this poem, we really didn't have much of an idea of what you were trying to say and why you were feeling this way. We're so sorry about your loss — and about the losses that go on and on in a war that has nothing but victims and no winners. Even you telling your cousin that you're gonna "ride to your last breath" is another example of this empty and destructive pattern of death for death. When will it end?

Education

Education in here is a joke. I've got a great example. We had to take tests for the county and the first problem on the math section was 1+1 I mean come on! I may be in jail, but I'm not stupid, and forcing people to stoop to that level of education makes 'em feel stupid (the second problem was 158-8).

It honestly made me mad, like I was wasting my time "In Jail." Now that's a hard thing to do. We read at like fourth grade level, and the science we learn I could get from my nephew. I'm about to graduate high school in the outs, but in here it's like I fell five years back.

-Young Kon

From The Beat: We appreciate the honesty of this piece, and it does seem ridiculous (and insulting) that you would be asked the answer to 1+1. But at the same time, when you say you're reading at the 4th grade level, we've been in your English class, so we know you have access to much more sophisticated reading material than that. So, our question to you is, how much are you able to find the material you need to educate yourself? Our own experience is that once you learn how to read and how to do arithmetic (more advanced than 1+1), you are able to get a real education by pursuing the things you want to learn and finding the resources to learn it. What are your

Lesson On Love

When people tell me to say what I have in mind, I will. But when it comes to love and relationships, I don't open my mouth because my love life sucks. Every time I get in a relationship, I'm not happy because I know I can do better. I want to tell him, but I'm a kind of person who doesn't open up truly in a relationship.

I do something I wouldn't tell my boyfriend, but when days go by I feel bad because he trust me and I shouldn't keep things from him. When I tell him, I have a feeling that he hates me. But I get a feeling that doesn't exist. Anyone can feel that way. I learned that I can be open, but when I'm not, I hurt people I hurt everybody that loves me.

-Boricua
From The Beat: It's a very hard thing to be open about some things, especially those things might hurt those we love. But in the end, we're probably just protecting ourselves from the pain we think we'll feel if the other person "knows the truth." But who really gets hurt? We think it's you. So maybe you need to just take a chance and jump in. You may be surprised by the

Regrets

I'm locked up
In the juvenile halls
But dat can't stop me
'Cause I go so hard
My mentality is different
Man, it's nothing like yours
I can't change who I am
And I love what I do
Yeah, I made some mistakes
And I bet you did too
I'm not saying that I like everything
dat I did
'Cause I regret what I did
Now I'm facing consequences
And I'm stuck in this place

-Da Fly Gangsta
From The Beat: Do you regret what you did to get here, or do you just regret the consequences of what you did? In other words, are you going to avoid making those mistakes that led you here once you're able to make your

Regrets

I have so much regrets
All these guilt trips just screwing with my head
Wish I could go back in time and stop it
All the lies and so forth
I regret ever acting so aggressive towards my mother
Stealing money from her for drugs
Along with the rest of my family members
It really hurts to see that everyone at home
Has to hide their wallets as soon as they know I'm around
Because they know what will happen obviously
I regret not goin' to school for the past two years
I think I'm the most behind with o credits
Two years blown on drugs
The only thing left to do is move on
So that's how my life's been so far,
Such a dope ride.

-Tripp
From The Beat: Maybe this is why they call it "dope." Of course, time lost can never be recovered, but time future is still within your hands to use (or abuse). If by "move on" you mean to leave this lifestyle behind you (knowing how much pain it has caused you and those you love), then, by all means, move on! Getting your education should be your first priority, even if you've lost credits and have to begin where you should have been two years ago. As for the drugs, find a support group that can help you when you're tempted to think you can do "just a little" since we both know where that "little" will lead you, making the hole you're trying to crawl out of that much deeper. You know where to look for the kind

We Ride Till the Day We Die

You have been here for me since 2003
I saw you kicking it at da park
We talked and talked
You are my good friend
No man can go through us
You're in here with me everyone sees
We like two people in one
You're always down for me
You know the people I know
You know my first love
We share each other's secrets
You know my past
We both struggle the same
We were both in the game
I aint gonna say her name
She knows who she is
My homegirl and trusty friend
Me and you are one.

-Lady Taz
From The Beat: We like this tribute to a dear friend, Taz, but we don't much care for the title, because it makes that phrase that we read so often ("Ride Till We Die") is like a promise to keep doing the things that lead you to lose your freedom, or worse. In this case, we THINK you mean (and we HOPE you mean) that you and she will remain the best of friends forever, and not that you are going to continue down the same path that has led to your separation. Are we right to

Homie And Friend

Friend
You want to be my friend?
You got friend
Share the friend
Invite the friend
Talk to the friend
See what's up with the friend
Go somewhere with the friend
Drink with the friend
Homie
Got a homie?
Invite the homie
Talk to the homie
Go kick it with the homie
Have fun with the homie
It's a friend and a homie
To be there with you
To tell you the truth
Who ain't gone leave you lonely?

-Ms. Green Eyes
From The Beat: We were with you 'til the end, and then you kind of lost us. Was that last question your way of saying that you can't really have a friend you can trust or count on? If that's what you're saying, we can't agree. We think there are friendships more powerful than love than can (and do) withstand the test of time. The problem is, you never know (until that time has passed) which friendships you can count on, and which you can't. But don't give up hope. True friends that don't leave you

It's Not Dat Serious

I always thought life was about having fun. Fun to me is about I thought smoking grapes, going dumb, getting hyphy, going to parties, sideshows, basically being on one, and most of all hustling.

But now I look back to that and come to think about it, it's not dat serious since when I'm always doing things I like doing, which is doing nothing but getting in trouble. I want to change my ways and choose my different friends and get myself in church, and get back to school and be a regular kid, so five years from now I can see myself with a good future and have a happy family and teach my kids not to be what I used to be when I was younger, which was outta control.

-Strawberry
From The Beat: Wanting to change the way you've been acting is the beginning of making that change. But only the beginning. What are you waiting for? We hope the answer is, "Nothing," and that when you get out of here you will follow through on the great promises you make in this piece. Don't disappoint yourself, or those kids you plan to teach the

Edumacation

Education in the hall is not the same to the school in the outs. In here, it's a little easier, but sometimes they make us feel like we're stupid.

-Erwin
From The Beat: We wish you had included some examples of when the education in here makes you feel stupid. When we see only two sentences trying to explain something as important as education, we have to wonder if you were paying attention

Why?

Why is it they think they can lie?
When all I want to do is cry!
Can't eat, can't sleep
I'm always wondering why?
Is it me that's being shy or telling a lie?
Oh tell me why?
I just want to go home so I don't have to hear anybody's lies here in this hole.
So it's almost about that time to say bye!
No more lies and no more cry.

-Allup
From The Beat: You have some clever rhymes in this poem, Allup, but we wish you could add some details. Who is lying to you? Is it individuals in the hall or is it the system (or both)? What has being shy got to do with it? Of course you want to go home, and you will. But do you think being home means "no

Coincidence

This time before I got locked up... Man it was a morning, I knew I had a warrant and I knew I had to watch my back like them other days.

You know every morning I would wake up and just hop in the shower and bounce to my homie's house and smoke a blunt all day, then drink and have fun doin' dirt just driving around and every time they stopped me I would just give another name and let me go like nothing.

So this one morning I wake up and did same old thing I called the homie talked and I swear I was thinking of my close homie who passed away not long ago and I was walkin to my car. I had this feeling this image of four walls and in my head heard some radios background me. Though, I had this feeling before, so as I was walkin' it popped in my head, jail, and I thought to myself, should I go back to my mom's or take two steps back to change time? But nah.

-Jose
From The Beat: If you're doing dirt, in due time one does get caught, and your gut feeling was right, given you new you were causing problems for yourself, and bam, here you sit today! Now what will you do? Any ideas? You need something in place, more than simply mom and two steps back,

Get Out

I wanna get out but I'm too in.
Did so much.
God would never forgive me for my sin
I'm fighting a battle that I can't win
every day it's a fight
tossin' and turning
can't sleep at night
having dreams doing wrong
don't know if I could do right
I'm not the type to bark
I stay real I bite.

-Tone
From The Beat: You're never "too in." Only you are holding yourself back from making real change. We know of plenty of folks who were knee deep in the life, through this incredible work who made big time changes and are leading amazing lives, why can't that be you? Have some courage! As far as our sin, well we bet if you believe your God will forgive. Show your family and your higher power that you are serious about making a turn for the better! Action speaks,

Relearn What Was Forgotten

I believe that it is realistic to say everyone is taught how to act as a child. Speaking for myself, my parents taught me manners, etiquette, and respect at a very young age. I could remember my earliest memories being told to always say please and thank you. They also told me to be nice to everyone around me, and never to give attitude to anyone.

As we grow up and hit teenage years, I believe that's when most people fall off. I was 16 years old when I really lost it, my junior year in high school. For me I decided for myself that I am my own person, and no one, not even my own parents can tell me what to do. I wanted more than anything to not be told what to do, or how to act, how to talk, nor who to be respectful to.

When I look back now and see how many people I hurt physically, emotionally, and even mentally, I see clearly why my parents tried to teach me how to act. If I would have listened to everything I was taught as a child, I don't think I would have ended up in Juvi. If only I could have followed the respect and proper etiquette I was taught, I wouldn't have experienced half of what I have.

But it is true, that once you reach a certain point in life, you have to relearn all of what you forgot; I looked at where doing what I wanted has gotten me, and then I look where I want to be. I can honestly say that without giving respect and manners, life cannot get you far. Remember what you are taught!

-Neikki

From The Beat: This wonderful piece of mature thinking and clear writing reminds us of an old saying, "Too soon old, too late smart." But, of course, you are not too old and it's not too late! What you describe of wanting to be your own person in control of your every decision is something most of us go through about that same age. We think we know everything and there's nothing anyone can tell us — especially our parents whose parental advice and lessons we can't appreciate until we, ourselves, are mature enough to recognize that they have learned a lot from their own experiences, and that they, too, were once 16 years old... We can tell you this from what you've written: Your parents taught you well. Whatever mistakes you've made to lead you to this place are not your future, but your past. If these words represent who you are today, then your parents should be as proud of you as you are of them. Thank you for taking this topic so seriously.

When I look back now and see how many people I hurt physically, emotionally, and even mentally, I see clearly why my parents tried to teach me how to act.

I Think I Have ESP

I think I have ESP for some strange reason
I had a dream 'bout my brother getting' shot and bleedin'
My dream really happened a couple days later
Before going to sleep endin' every night in a prayer
Shot by his best friend, and now paralyzed
"Can't trust nobody!" That's what I realized
Now I'm hesitant to get close to the next person
'Cause they might be on a mission and in the end just try to hurt me

-Reesie Cupz

From The Beat: Whether you have ESP or not, it's terrible to be a kid who has dreams of family getting shot, and it reflects reality of the world you have to live in. Of course, it's even more terrible that it really happened, and that your brother now is paralyzed and dependent on others for his every need. We're very sorry about that. Maybe there are other lessons to be learned, besides your conclusion that you "can't trust nobody." Maybe it's time to think hard about the kind of life you want for yourself, and what you have to do — and what you have to stop doing — in order

World's Too Cold

It's nothing nice comin' up in a world of so much hatred, violence and pain
It's a cruel world, so anything you ever dreamed of doing goes down the drain
It's insane how much there's to lose but little to gain
But still knowing this I put myself frontline in the game
Why? You ask me... well listen close and I'll tell you the reason
I love this way of life so I'm bang hard on all four seasons
I can't be sneezing 'cause I might miss something and my rivals I'll be cheesing
Talking 'bout, "Damn that fool's lucky his boys were there or else he wouldn't be breathing"
So many times I've been put in a situation where I had to do something scandalous and crucial
I don't dare to tell you what I did but what I did I could tell you it kept them neutral
Gotta watch my back for these suckas that are out to get me
Gotta watch my back for these fools that don't respect me
It's a higher chance of me getting' hit than rolling seven on a dice game
Every move I make is a gamble, and if I slip it's nothing nice mane
I don't sit around all day moping and whining asking why
Just work with the struggles I've been given and watch my back as each day passes by
See I never been too much interested in education or schools
For me education was learning from the older homies and school was fools
I rather be hot
On the block
Money bustin' out my socks watching for cops
Then to be in a classroom BSing all day pretending to be something I'm not
My life is treal
Nothing fake all real
So here's the real if you can't handle the truth I suggest you pop a pill
And you'll start to feel exactly what I'm saying and where I'm coming from
See, sooner or later you have to face all the bs you're running from
Ughh... I'm coming dumb
I'm like a fat chick at burger spot
I want everything and all of it, 'cause homie, I deserve a lot
This is a game and I'm in it to win it until I finish
Gotta keep rolling 'cause every minute of my life is spinning
But I'm winning
Face grinning t
Taking out anything in my path
So much game I'm pouring it's like a bath
So your umbrella ain't equipped to last
I move so fast
Homie I'm quicker than a payback
Y'all really can't see me, I'm the needle in the haystack
Sipping on xo Remmy
A 5th of that privileged Henny
A 12 pack plus a forty
Dumbass drunk
Slamming slumps
Looking for funk
And dodging authorities
I don't feel safe once I take that first step out of my town
I'm steady looking around
Tripping off every movement, sight, smell and sound
I'm a hound
But I don't bark I bite
Roaring down the street shaking the blacks and white
Homie, we smash on sight
'Cause we want everything to have a hold
And so does everyone else in the world, that why this world's too cold.

-Wolfy

From The Beat: You'd rather be "hot on the block" watchin' out for cops... but instead, here you are, taking orders from strangers telling you when you can go to the bathroom! Brilliant! You "move so fast" that you allowed the system to snatch you away from everything and everyone you love. More brilliant! And how brilliant it is to choose a life that imprisons you in a tiny geographic area where you feel afraid to step out of! How can you possibly know about "everyone else in the world" when you've limited your world so profoundly? You tell us that you love this way of life, which (to us) means you love handing over every decision to another, whether it be a shot caller on the outs or a shot caller here [your counselors]. It's all a lot easier, isn't it, when you don't have to do any thinking for yourself. Or is it? How does popping a pill or staying "dumbass drunk" help you "face all the bs you're running from?" If YOU can handle the truth, here's our sense of what's real: We hope you hold onto this piece so that a few years down the road (if you are still around), you will be able to read what you wrote here, and see how rooted in childhood it sounds! Tragically, if you continue down this path, you may be looking back from a prison cell, but we predict that wherever it happens, you will bring a more mature mentality to the importance of your own life, wishing you had paid more attention to things that you disrespect today (like a school education, for example, or "rivals" who are only rivals because someone else has told you they are). But the real tragedy is that we can see that you have gifts that could lead you anywhere you chose to go, but instead you've chosen to follow. We have far too many friends doing far too much time in far too many prisons not to know that the things others have taught you to follow will lose

Don't Hate

Haters will never stop. I lost my friends. I lost my most important thing, my family. I lost myself. I didn't know who I was anymore. It's over for me.

Why they hate on me if I never hated on anyone? I realized that I had no one anymore. Somehow it made me a different person.

-Janet

From The Beat: Without more details and examples of what you mean Janet, this is more of tease than a piece. How did you lose friends and family? Why do you think it's over for you. (It isn't over for you, by the way...) Who is hating on you, and what do you mean by hating? If you think you are a "different person" now, what is the difference? These are all questions that we wish you would answer in a Beat piece,

Education In The Hall

I'm a junior about to graduate next year. I got locked up my last six weeks of school. The Hillcrest hall is a bad place to be, education-wise, because the learning is too low for me. I feel like I've been put back in middle school.

I know for a fact Hillcrest could do better because at YGC in San Francisco, the credit given is the same as a regular school. For example, I am in U.S. History as a junior, and when I came to Hillcrest, they had all the girls in "Social Studies." The last time I was in Social Studies was in Elementary. Basically, Hillcrest juvenile hall... why build an expensive facility for learning when the credit is only going to electives on the outs?

-Coco

From The Beat: Do you mean that you won't get credit for U.S. History at Hillcrest, but you would if you were in San Francisco? We don't understand why that would be. Are you interested in US History, or is it just about the credits you won't be getting? How

Mi Vida

Well, it's like... this I don't deserve this. My life is hell. Why? Well, first I take time to realize that I'm still here. I don't wanna be here no more. I can't take this place. My mom says to me, "God does everything for a reason."

This place is not helping. I feel that the things that happen to me are cruel. Why me, I ask again? Now I realize that once I get out there I will change, be another person. I will stop listening, I will stop kicking it, and most important, stop falling.

-Janet

From The Beat: If being in this cruel place actually makes you follow through on the promises you make here — to be a new person that stops doing the things that cause you to come here — then maybe you already know God's reason for putting you here... When you ask yourself, "Why me?" do you come up with any answers? If every action has consequences, can you connect the dots back from this consequence to your own

Locked Up

Damn! Locked up again. It's like my days won't end, day after day doin' the same thang. I miss being out chillin' with my girls, laying with my man. I cry every Friday night 'cause of all the pain. Knowing I can't see them or hear their voice makes me so mad. I just want a break.

My PO's both don't understand I don't drink or do drugs, but they just put me in here 'cause I was out in my front yard when I was on the ankle bracelet. I can't understand. Just wanna be out, but I gotta do my time in order to be able to see my man and friends again.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Does "doing your time" also include planning for what you're going to do (and what you're not going to do) when you do get out again? We hope so, because if you don't make a serious plan that leads to a better future, you're letting others make those plans for you, and nobody cares as much about you as you. So don't just do your time, use your time to your advantage so that when you get out, you won't

Court And Communicating School

Community schools are fake. You don't even take tests.

It's basically independent studies with a G.S.

They throw a big book in your face with a pencil and paper and say don't talk

And as soon as you start working, they watch you like a hawk

And if you stop working, you better not break a rule

Or by the end of the day, you'll be sittin' in a room with a bed, toilet, desk, and stool

They have you in and out so they don't have to deal with you

-Steve

From The Beat: How would you run the school inside the hall if you were in charge? What have you learned (if anything) in school here? What would like to learn that you

Cheaters

This world is full of players

Cheaters, and liars

Boys who just want to hit it then quit it

But let me tell you that aint cool

'Cause some people can get hurt

And get to the point

That they gone alert

The homies

They gone come

And bust you up

So players cheaters, and liars

Better watch what you got

-Ms. Green Eyes

From The Beat: The history of the world (and certainly, your own history) should tell you that busting up players, cheaters and liars has never stopped cheating and lying. Can't you think of some other way to deal with boys who cheat and lie than the tired old threats that never work anyway? Forget what someone else has told you is "the thing to do," and examine the situation for yourself. If the consequence (busting someone up) doesn't change the behavior (and it never has), then why not try something

I Have Relearned

I remember when I was like around 5 or 6. I took a little boy's toy and pushed him. My mom told me, "Don't do that! That's not good." Then, when I was 12, I got in the gangs. I always used to sit in front of the BART and wait for a girl or a boy that I can jump with my friends, to take their money. One day, I got caught by someone that remembered me when I jumped him. He said, "It's you. Come here," and I got jumped. So I never did that again.

Then I remember what my mom told me when I was little. She always told me, "Don't take what's not yours." When I got bigger, I started to get cars. Now I have relearned because I got caught by the police. Now I'm in Juvy and now I know that I won't ever do that again.

-Bones

From The Beat: Sadly, sometimes the only way we learn that fire burns is by putting our hand in it. The important thing is that you have now learned what your mother was trying to tell you. She was right, and now you know it! That is an

Dreams

When you got dreams try to keep at them

Just 'cause you lock down don't mean you can't have them

Sit back and let the wind take control

If you keep believing you're going to feel it in your soul

In my life I got many things to do

Everything I talk about revolves around school

Even though I still be on the block

I still look at my watch makin' sure my time don't stop

My life is a revolving cycle, it's on like people in motor cross that ride cycles

So I never give up 'cause that's not me

My dreams go to the top of the tallest tree

Hot like hot sauce on the block

You like a pimple man ya get popped.

-Youngsta

From The Beat: What are your dreams? What's the plan upon returning home? This is as good of a time as any to start preparing for your date with freedom. We must ask, how you going to manage the block and school? Almost impossible when it comes to chillin' with homies, who are not on the same page. Are you strong enough to walk away from drama and those who do not go to school? Now, lets

Stop

Stop snitching

Stop lyin'

Stop dyin'

Stop cryin'

Stop getting locked up

Stop holding the block down

Stop screaming out your town

Stop showing off to these boys

Stop making all that noise

Stop hatin'

Stop servin' satan

There's a lot more to say but I'm not

But I do wish all these thing and more everybody will stop

-M&M's

From The Beat: Wouldn't the world be a much finer place if people — all people — followed your list of don'ts. If you were to write a similar poem about things people should do, what would be on that list? Maybe you could call it:

Let It Rain

All this pain I feel inside won't go away. My heart is filled with a lot of negative things each and every day. I wish I had a magic wand to change the way I feel.

If my dreams came true, my broken heart will heal. I'm going crazy, no longer sane. The only time I'm happy is when the man above lets it rain.

-M&M's

From The Beat: Sometimes, rain can wash away our sorrows. But in your case, we think the sun can come out in your life and make what seems so dark right now much brighter and warmer. Those dreams that you hope will come true are like seedlings; they need to be watered, fertilized and warmly

Life

I'm stuck in one place

Trying to move forward

But my feet are stuck in some kinda paste

Here, let me give you a tour of my life

My 1st time ever I was supposed to be his wife

But instead I was a slave under the knife

My 2nd time ever I was getting played

He said he loved me but never stayed

Anyways what are you doing? Get out of this place

You ain't worth nothing, you just a waste of space.

Yeah! Yeah! Go away

We don't want you to stay

I love you, I hate you, just stop talking.

I'm dead inside, and yet I'm still walking.

-Lil' Kitty

From The Beat: You are far from dead, inside or out. You've packed a lot of feelings into just a few lines, and expressed a lot of experience, even if it's sad experience. But you know, just because you haven't found a real man yet (but just some boys pretending to be men) doesn't mean that you won't find real love from a real (and responsible) adult man. Give yourself time. So many boys are raised without decent male role models, that it's hard to blame them for still acting like kids. But nobody is "worth nothing" and

vThis Life

This life of blood, sweat, and tears
Love, hate, and fears
I do the damn thing and have for years.
Stay on the block,
Like hands stay on a clock.
The inner tribunal
Only drugs, slugs, mugs
In this life of a thug
People try to help
But all I can do is shrug

-Hoodlum

From The Beat: Out all of the things that could be done to help you rise above the drugs, slugs and mugs, why is it that struggling like a fool the tactic your choose to use? In due time you will come to realize that the block has nothing to offer you other than drugs and some of the other things you just mentioned. There's a big world out there, so we'll advise you to start thinking out side of the box in order to figure out where you really want to

Pops And Déjà vu

Déjà vu is the craziest thing you could have
You could be dreamin' at night, having a fight wit' yo' dad
You wake up in the morning take a piss and wash yo' hands
Then the next thing you know pops wake up feeling mad
He take his feelings out on you 'cause you know he bad
So in yo' mind you like I can't believe what he said
It's déjà vu so that dream just came true

-B

From The Beat: Why do you suppose pops is mad? Is he always mad? How does he feel about you being in

My Exit Strategy — School, Work and Church

My exit is that when I get out I'm gonna go to school in the morning because I didn't use to go to school, and I use to stay home and be board. I used to go out with my friends and get in trouble, but if I go to school I can't get in trouble, after school go to my work. I work in a car wash so that keeps me busy in the afternoon.

After work I'm gonna go to my grandmother's church. I used to go to church before and I use to play the drums. Well, I asked God to forgive me and that I'm gonna go to church like I used to, so that will keep me busy in the night, and after church go to sleep and do everything all over the next day.

-Bones

From The Beat: That's good you have a plan,

Exit Strategy

I do have a personal exit strategy for the personal war I'm fighting with drugs. I was/am an addict of a couple things, mainly coke, and I want to get out of it. I do because it has negatively affected my life by destroying relationships and ultimately brought me here.

This is the last place that I planned to be nor want to be. It has been a huge wake up call but with addiction, that is not enough.

My first plan in my strategy to get off drugs is to keep busy, for when I am bored I use.

The next plan is to spend more time with my family and less with my friends. I am currently rekindling my relationship with my parents, sisters, and most of all God.

Sober living is the thing I want most in my life. When I am using I am a different person doing things that I would not normally do.

I also need to accept my addictive personality and the fact that I have a problem.

I came to this place because of three felony burglary charges, something I did while super intoxicated and under the influence of substances. I know this would not have happened if I were not using, due to the fact I do not recall anything from the burglaries.

Furthering my exit strategy, I plan to surround myself with a whole different lifestyle including healthy habits and hobbies such as reading and exercise. I plan to concentrate on all the positives in my life and not the negative. I want to think positive and not negative, about things.

-John

From The Beat: Excellent "exit strategy." What's the plan if you should fail? We hope you also have a backup plan, and another backup plan if you fail with the back up plan. It is not going to be easy, but given you are very determined to break the habit, we believe you will get through this dark period in your young life.

The Outs

The outs are callin
My release is near
All I gotta do
Is lift my head up and hear
Soon I'll be back on my block
Cruising around in a drop top
With the homies listening to furl or pac
I miss the beautiful females
And having money in my pocket
Giggin' on a yellow rocket
I miss havin' Jordans on my feet
Or wit' my boy Krazyie
Rhymin' to a beat.
Mayne the outs are callin'
And I'm callin' them too.

-Young Kon

From The Beat: Back with the homies, ok, juvenile detention didn't teach you much. What will be different this next go round? Sounds like you are going back to what

Selfish System

It seems they on me for a selfish crime I didn't even commit

But at the same time it wasn't even legit
I guess they trying to lock me up and toss the key
But it's nothing I remain where the bosses be
Flossed in tee's blue, green, yellow to purple
Most cats is hella mean only couple of urkles
Got us locked down 'till we hit the court room
Hoping I get a chance to hit a 'port soon
So all the stress can flow out my body
Hit the outs wit' a vest 'cause they on me like gotti
It ain't my fault it's the cards I was givin'
Like the flow I be spittin' grown women respect pimpin'
Henny sippin' is my remedy
I leave 'em wit' no description all they know is
that he fled the scene
I can't measure green but I know I'm good when it's long
No need to cop it, I got it, no need to check, 'cause I'm
gone.

-Rich da factor

From The Beat: Why do you suppose you are locked up for a crime you did not commit? Do you believe in the end justice will be served and you will be free? And why glamorize a mob life when you are free, especially if you are innocent? Why a vest? Come on Rich! And why speak of pimpin' when you talk about women? You know damn well, your mom or your sister would not be feeling your thoughts in this piece. Do you

Just A Piece

Soakin' up pain like rain in the dirt
Droppin' down to my knees asking Got to take
away the hurt
Lookin' back at my life it looks like a blood
stained T-shirt
Chest getting ready to collapse
Feel like I'm 'bout to relapse
Go back to the grimy life
Staying packed
Can't do it won't do it
It's an up hill battle
The war is far from over
But I'm gonna make it to the top
Doing everything I can until what's left of my
heart stops!

-David

From The Beat: You can ask God for all the help in taking away the hurt, but in the end, you still have to make a choice about how you want to live your life. It boils down to you young man! We hope you rise up and make better choices, you already know what

I Just Want To Get Out

I just want to get out!
I just want to get out and see my family
Man I just want to get out!
I just want to get out and kick it with my boys
Man I just want to get out!
I just want to get and see my girl
Man I just want to get out!
I just want to get and go to school
Man I just want to get out!
I just want to get out and live my life
Man I just want to get out!
I just want to get out and stay out and never come
back.
That's what I really want to do!

-Abraham

From The Beat: We hear you loud and clear. But you need to expand a bit more than repeat the hook, "I Just Want To Get Out!" What's the

Déjà vu On The Pancakes

The last time I remember I had déjà vu was about one month ago. I was sleeping when I dreamed that my mom came in my room to wake me up for breakfast.

She had made pancakes and I was about to take a bite when something wakes me up. I look up and it was my mom telling me breakfast was ready. I got dressed and went to the kitchen to see some pancakes on a plate waiting for me.

-Albert

From The Beat: Nice little piece on the ol' déjà vu topic. Get back to the home front

If I Go To Camp . . .

I'm gonna try to get out as soon as possible

I wanna go and live my life as a teenager, like right now, it's Friday, instead of being in here I could be with my lady or going to Great America with the homies, the other thing I wanna do when I get out is go and get a job and get a car because that's what I like, cars and girls and in here I can't have either. So why be in here if none of my interest are in here? when I get out I'm gonna just think twice before I drink, smoke, fight do anything stupid because it is just not worth it.

-Elmo

From The Beat: That's right. Use that brain of yours and stay safe, handle your responsibilities and

Pen-ological Warfare

There is a war going on. The war can, must and will be won by somebody. I believe in war. Quite often I like to kick butt and take names later. I want to win. I like to win. I appreciate and respect fierce competitor. I don't like wimps. I don't respect wimps!

The war I speak of is between right and wrong, good and bad and we are misled into believing that right always wins. But nice guys often finish last. And when you're in a war you've no time to be nice. You need to fight. It's right to fight.

I don't understand how people in poverty, people at the bottom of the barrels of life, folks in juveniles, jails, and prisons don't/won't fight... I speak not of fight with stick, knives or guns. That's child's play. I'm speaking of a fight to revolutionize and transmogrify your own situation in life. Where you are (at this very moment) in life, you must be willing to stand up, speak out and seek out folks who share your dreams or goals.

You've heard that the pen is mightier than the sword? And I don't even need to tell you how authentic that cliché is. But I'm afraid we often allow the potency of a cliché to be diminished through redundancy.

I wonder do we really understand how powerful writing really is. If one wishes to advance in school, excel in politics, get ahead in business or defend one's right; the pen is a necessary tool. And when there are situations in which a person or persons are wronged, denied, abused or misused one needs excellent writing skills.

As this writer has meticulously and analytically scrutinized the CYA, jail and prison systems in America, I'm convinced that one of the main reasons prisoners are treated so horribly is because they can't write. By and large a lot of folks who are incarcerated are not well educated. In fact, one of the reasons many guys get in trouble is because they drop out of schools and drop into drugs, gangs, guns and violence. And the powers that be will exploit and manipulate the ignorance of the inmate to prevent him/her from ever excelling as an outmate...

The reason hillbilly, out of the woods, and hick prison guards are able to abuse guys behind walls has much to do with a lack of verbal as well as written communication skills by the incarcerated. If folks in American jails did what the Honorable President Nelson Mandela and his crew did, prison authorities would be in trouble.

The Honorable President Mandela transformed his prison cell block into a university. Each one had to reach and teach one. They taught fellow prisoners how to read, write and count. They taught philosophy, politics, business and critical analysis. They didn't wait on somebody to rehabilitate them, they taught each other. And when they were denied basic rights or abused, they got the brightest among them to grieve in writing. They got results. They out their captors. They knew the game and they played it well.

If there is a leader in the prison who is bringing inmates together they often transfer him. They cut the body off by the head. However, Mr. Mandela and his fellow (wrongly convicted) prisoners were so brilliant that they had an A-team, a B-team and a C-team. And if the captain, A.W., Deputy Warden etc. transferred the leader out of the prison, there was always a B person ready, groomed and prepared to step up and continue the movement.

And the movement was not a violent one. They were far too bright to entertain ideas of beating down prison guards with sticks, shanks or fists. They beat their abusive captives into submission if not admission with books, politics, pen, prayer and the law. It is like a game of chess. One must out think one's opponent... It is indeed a warfare. And the war can be won with experts with the pen. And when a prisoner masters the utilization of his pen, he is ready for pen-ological warfare.

And it's extremely perplexing in America because of the games in prison guards play. They play inmates against each other. They formed violence, racism, and prejudice. They exploit the biases among the inmate population. If I'm engaged on a mission to assault an inmate whom I'm convinced is a child molester, I won't focus on the abuse of my captor.

The America inmate has been lulled to sleep the man. And unfortunately the American prisoner is not only the inmate trapped in physical prisons, but there are millions of people trapped (in civilian life) in the prisons of poverty, addictions and or abuse. When you are homeless you're in a prison. When you are addicted to crack, speed or grass, you're in a prison. There is a multiplicity of forms of prisons. And I'm tired of seeing people trapped in these various prisons who have become

SHERMAN MANNING

"The pen is mightier than the sword." We know many of you have heard this saying before. And without realizing it, many of you have fallen victim to the pen. Think about it... What went in front of a judge when you got sentenced? A whole lot of written documentation about your crime. The key word is written, for that's what is holding many of us back — not the spoken word, but the written word. Some of us are under the impression that our spoken abilities are all that's needed. But if you think about it, sometimes writing can be more powerful than the spoken word. This next Beat Within veteran writer sends us a piece called, "Pen-ological Warfare," where he encourages us to fight for our rights. But he's not encouraging violence, or hate. Instead, he's encouraging that we fight using the same tools that are used against us, and that's old-fashioned pen and paper. He has a very good point and he sends us that point of view from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA.

puppets, boys, cowards and cats...

It is time to rise, take up arms (pens) and fight! If you don't fight for you and I don't fight for me, we're doomed. Ain't nobody gonna do nothing for you that you can do for you... And I've become sick and tired of being tired. I see all these prison revolutionaries (in and out of jails) talking all this crap about what I should/could do. They got the game confused. They need to fight the good fight, and (quite frankly) if you're reading my words right now I want you to stop trying to figure out what I should, could and can do.

And everything you think another person should do to improve your, my or our situation; you do it! They tell me (all the time) about my access to reporters. They tell me (all the time) about my influence as well as my affluence. But they don't know the half of what I'm doing.

I'm not gonna brag but I'll say this, the measure of success which I've been able to achieve has been because I work my butt off. I write, think, visualize, pray and strategize when others are asleep. I drain every second I can out of every day that I have. I give it my all and all y'all. So I'm just one man! And I'm looking for some sons that'll stand up. Square their shoulders and fight. I don't need any more orators. I don't wanna hear what you can say, I wanna see what you can do. Don't congratulate me on my accomplishments, I don't need it. My ego needs no stroking, etc. I'm cool on all that. Get your butt up and do something!

Write a 602, an appeal, a grievance, a letter to the editor, senator or governor... Do something! Engage in the fight for equality and human rights. Use your pen. When you use your pen as a tool for change, it's what I call pen-ological warfare.

I won't allow anybody to oppress me without a fight. I gotta right to fight for me....

I wanna shout out to Gloria Killian...She is a Mother Teresa to the prisoners. I shout to Attorney Mike Molfetta, Wil Coker, Jeffrey Buttle, Scott Moir, Faisal Salah and to Montel. I shout out to Injustice on ABC, the Innocence Projects, Innocence International, Peter Rose, Rolando Cruz, Chuck (playa, playa) Hedrick, all wrongly convicted prisoners....

I salute the family of Lawrence Alvarado who was murdered at Corcoran SATF by a guards bullet! I say thank you to Nate McCartney, Damon Dash, Ralph White and you. Be sure to go to our new site <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/publicsafety>.

Join NAPS today! We do have paid positions for youth but need all the volunteers we can get. We need ideas, suggestions, advice, etc. join our pro bono task force, write petitions, emails, etc, we need your input today. Join NAPS. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/publicsafety>. Devin Lazerine (rap up), Matthew Gutschick, Beth Battle Anderson and Justin Betty...I send my kindest regards to young, socially active, college students all over. Y'all keep up the great work...

"What do you do with the anger?" Oprah asked Eli Wiesel... "I teach and I write," he said. "My writing can sensitize the student or reader and help to tell the story," he said...

That's pen-ological warfare! I call on every person in these prisons, jails, juvenile and detention centers, etc. To write or die! You can transcend the places that hold you if you write!

Spider asked me about a certain officer the other day. I respect Spider. He's a good fella but I told him this officer was irrelevant. How dare I waste my time on toy soldiers? A loud mouth who didn't get enough attention as a kid. He's irrelevant. I spend my days, my nights, my prayers, my tears, my energy, etc., etc. and my ink on people who matter! If you are pursuing this newsletter you matter to me.

If you are a pastor, student, counsel, juvenile or whoever... The crime can't change; all that can change (good or bad, for better or worse) is you. You can change! And if your ass is still doing dope in jail or prison, come on...you can change. And... write or die!

NASIR DAVIS For everything we go through there is a way to release. And releasing can be very relieving because if we leave all those experiences, feelings, and attitudes bottled up inside, there could be a time when they're released irrationally. These are times where we usually find ourselves in a predicament we wish we weren't in. In fact, in these situations, we usually think to ourselves, if only I would've thought before I acted. Well, this next writer is a writing survivor. He releases by writing and we're glad he does because he's a great writer. This week he speaks about his release in a piece titled, "I'ma Write About It." He talks about many struggles he's had to endure and is still enduring, but he begins each paragraph by saying, "I'ma write about it." For we're sure he understands the importance of release. He then concludes with a piece about how many warnings he got from God. And our only introduction to that piece is we live and we learn. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, and he sent a dedication to someone we haven't heard from in a while, Rhonda Jones. Both Nasir and Rhonda are major players in The Beat Within scheme.

Warning! Warning! Warning! (From God)

You know throughout my years of incarceration, I've thought about, did God warn me or send me any major signals I could end up living "life" behind bars. It's many times in my life that I could speak on where he warned me but for some reason there's one explicit time he warned me, and I knew he was warning me, but like they say a hard head will make for a soft butt. So before I go any further Beat Family, if God is warning you about something in your life please take heed and listen before you end up before you end up throwing your life away. But remember God will give you another chance if you come to him with a repented heart.

I had just gotten out of Juvenile hall by the skin of my teeth in time to be home for Christmas of "92" and to be with my fiancée and family. But little did I know, the blessing I thought was a gift from God turned out to be a curse which almost had me riding in the back of a hearse. All my family thought I was gone for sure this time because I had a 5-year C.Y.A. sentence hanging over my head for a prior dope case I had caught a year and a half earlier. I even thought I was a goner because the judge told me that if he saw me again I was gone to the "A" for sure no questions asked. So I had prepared myself mentally to go do some time and deal with these knuckleheads in juvenile prison. I even got my fiancée off, but she wasn't having that cause she swore she would never leave me, plus she was way older than I. I was 17 yrs old, she was 27 yrs old and by the way, she had been to prison before, in fact we meet when she was still on parole. I know cause I spoke to her parole agent several times in a positive way. (Her parole agent thought we was a good couple)

Anyways I'm at home and everybody celebrating they number one man is back at the house (my whole immediate family is females, except my little brother) and we kicked it that night. But the thing is I was released on a program called Detention Furlough, where I come home at nighttime and be back at juvenile hall all day until 6:00 or 7:00p.m. And then they drop me back at home till 6:00 a.m. and then I get picked up in a van. There is about 10-15 of us who are in this program at one time. We all have different charges pending against us and are just waiting on the judges in our cases to rule our cases and decide what our fate will be. Well, only one of two things could happen to me because I was 17 years old and they already ruled sending me to CYA (My offense was violating probation, they say I stole gas in my car) So either I would go to a placement till I was 18 yrs old or plain and simple they would dismiss my charges and cut me loose. Well here's what happened.

I was doing good on the program as far as not getting caught for committing any crimes (but truthfully I was off the hook when they would drop me home at night, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde) but God knows what I did. Anyways me and my fiancée was living together and I was literally taking care of her and providing a roof over her head and making sure she was straight, cause I loved this female y'all, she was my first love. I didn't say I love you that easy to anyone my whole life because of the pain and drama I had been through in my life. Anyway Cindy was my love I would have done anything for this woman and yeah god knows I did commit some felonies for this woman, that's how we stayed eating. I guess looking back over it all while I was busy loving her she hated me for no reason. I was so sprung (I can laugh about it now) I had even got this woman's name tattooed on my chest only after

us being together for 2 and half months. Oh and right after that she moved in.

I've always been a go-getter in my life and I don't like depending on people (now I depend on God) for nothing because they will let you down, and sometimes not intentionally. Anyways I felt this Furlough program was putting my life on hold, truth be told they was trying to save my life before I destroyed it, actually that was another warning from god. One day I woke up and told Cindy that I don't think I am going back to the Furlough program, she acted like she didn't want me to leave the program, but I knew in my heart it didn't matter to her as long as I was making the money and looking out for her. Plus if she truly cared me like she said she did, she would have demanded I leave my life of crime period. Well needless to say I got dressed quickly and headed for downtown cause I didn't want to be in the house when the van pulled up in case they wanted to search the house for me.

Well the plan worked I was officially AWOL but they called a few times asking my mother to have me turn myself in, but it wasn't happening, plus I was still at the system because they had taken me away from my family for most of my life as a child I was 15 years old. And now they talking about placement, at the time I would have rather faced death and I almost did.

A few months go by and things is hectic in the street and me and my girl is getting into it over every little thing, cause come to find out that she is the jealous type in a real way. Any female say hi to me she wanna "kill 'em" and oh boy don't let my mother give me a kiss or one of my sisters give me a hug, this broad will go ballistic. Yeah things started turning way out but I'm loyal so I did my best to hang in there but I was miserable. I stated cheating and just doing me because I wasn't going to let this woman control me, truthfully I allowed her to affect my character and personality. We split a few times but I took her back because I felt bad for her.

Man I even ended up getting robbed because she allowed a dope fiend to come into my house one late night, instead of serving him through the window, I was sick in a real way. But I got enough strength to go see what was going on and next thing I know there is a chrome pistol in my face demanding all my money and stash of drugs. Not to go into that cause it's a whole different story, but he didn't get away with much. Anyways all of the above mentioned events was taken a real toll on me and I guess I was fed up and rather be in jail then out in the streets madness I was experiencing (they say the way of a transgressor is hard) and straight up a real life drama these rappers be speaking on, my life was like an unwanted movie script and I was done playing the role.

I've been known to be sly about things, so this night I had a cool plan to turn myself in (got to be god) but I didn't tell Cindy anything. I hopped in my truck ('79 Ford pick up) and told Cindy come on lets go for a ride, she was used to us just riding around and chillin' so she ain't suspicious of what's taking place. Always we drive around for a bit, and then I make a move straight to the San Bernardino County Juvenile Facility. She still don't know what's going on because you have to drive past the hospital and the hall is in the back. Well now we're in the parking lot with the engine running. When I look at her in the face and told her business that I was turning myself in, man she started crying and said she was pregnant. I should have jumped out of the truck window in a hurry and said see ya' later. Because little did I know a whole lot of people would be crying for me after my trial. And Cindy would disappear before I even got arraigned, and wouldn't be having any children any time soon. Well that's what the Devil wanted me to believe about my future.

Well I didn't turn myself in that night because I was too stupid to realize this broad was pulling a fast one over me. I stayed on the run for four months and in the process got shot a second time and inherited a cold beef with one of my realities which all led up to where I am now in prison and have been for the past fourteen and a half years of my young life.

Beat Family, especially the youngsters if you got a program or some responsibility to take care with the courts, please go ahead and do it, so later on you won't have regrets. Pay now or you will suffer later. Peace out and love.

I'ma Write About It (Part 2)

Real Talk Y'all

Beat Within family it's your man's and them Nasir, been away briefly but I'm back with some heat for yo' mind. No matter what the (system) do they can't stop what god created and that's a fact. Now peep this piece dedicated to the whole royal and loyal Beat Within family and those behind the scenes. Oh yeah Rhonda I got you it's all to the good.

I told you before when the pain gets too thick to bear I'ma write about it 'cause I know y'all care. A few days ago they said I attempted to commit the act of battery on a nurse by throwing a top to box at him, come on now that ain't my character. But CDC gotta meet they quota for potential violence on level 4's, and you know I'ma write about it 'cause it's wrong.

Went to committee yesterday and look how they did me (I ain't trip) gave me a SHU for my last so-called offense, God is my only defense. Then told me I may not get out the hole this time till June 28, 2008. Wow my parole date will be here by then, Lord willing, I'ma write about it 'cause it's sick how the enemy attacks when you're strong. (True)

I'ma write about it, when the devil is all up in my face trying to give me a case before I shake this place not gonna happen got my armor on!

I'ma write about it when these c/o's come to my door with that bull thinking they can pull they father's (Satan) business off but it won't happen captain 'cause I must be 'bout my father's (God-Yahweh) business and he gave me the victory before.

I'ma write 'bout it when I hear my lil' brother on the block slanging rocks, got his head busted by the cops now he on lockdown, almost got three strikes but God gave him a chance with five years with half.

I'ma write about it 'cause I thought my bro learned his lesson when God gave him a blessing in '05 after he got out the pen and his homeboy, shot him twice up close and personal. Left him wearing a shhh bag but not a toe tag. So I gotta write about it cause it hurts to see he ain't learned. I'ma write about it when my niece writes and tells me she's a mother but she ain't even graduated high school, that ain't cool but I blame me and her mother cause we failed. Though I ain't the father I still gotta holla.

I'ma write about it when after fourteen years I'm finally gonna get justice for being wrongly convicted for attempted murder, the devil don't like that. God is good though I'ma

write about it when I seen a grown man cry 'cause he know demons has got him but he doesn't let go when God said let it roll son.

I'ma write about it when I'm so full of energy it's an eternal flame burning in me from God but these haters and nay sayers wanna put it out or call me crazy. I'm still gonna praise Him.

I'ma write about when you look in my face and tell me a bald face lie, 'cause your eyes can't hide the truth and we both know that, so hold that lie homie.

I'ma write about it when you screaming loud but ain't saying nothing still I remain silent 'till it's time to break this code of silence. Feel me.

I'ma write about it when the family finally coming around talking about hold on for more days cause you 'bout to hit the gates and be free. But if I ain't free inside I could never be free on the street that's just me.

I'ma write about it when you tell me to stop smiling and you got a frown on your face, I think you just wanna take my place.

I'ma write about it and let the youngsta know you still can grow in spite of obstacles being thrown in your way. You just gotta push past the madness.

I'ma write about it and won't sugar coat it when the flavor it shhh 'cause that's just it, so don't have a fit.

I'ma write about it even when you don't like my style or write so quit bitin' cause I heard you before but we ain't going there!

I'ma write about it when you hiding secrets not knowing everything done in the dark shall come to the light yes sir! I'ma write about it when you tell me I shouldn't speak on that but the truth hurts and some toes gonna be stepped on, lord fights my battles though.

I'ma write about it when I walk through the valley of shadow of death long as the lord give me a breath.

I'ma write about it when you wondering where this glow is coming from, do you know it's somewhere we all can go but wont.

Y'all know I'ma write about it and not get discouraged because it's not about me but saving the youngstas and letting them know it's a better way today. Stay strong and keep fighting the good fight of faith. I'll holla at y'all in a minute Lord willing. Yeah real talk y'all!

ERIC VON CLUTTS

Heroin is arguably the worst drug to be addicted to because when you do it for a while and then try to stop, you get physically sick to a point where it feels like you're going to die, or so we've heard. This next writer personifies heroin as being a king and then brilliantly expresses what heroin can do to you, especially if you start to worship it like it's a king. He talks about what it does to both men and women and how though people despise it, they will constantly reach for it if it's near. We can't begin to fully capture the talent displayed in his poem. But we can suggest that people read it. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. And if you've ever done heroin, we know this poem will hit home for you.

King Heroin

Beware my friend my name is "King Heroin."
Known to all as the destroyer of men.
Where first I was born no one knows.
But I come from the land where the poppy grows.
I'm a world of power and you'll know it's true.
Use me once and you'll know it too.
I entered the country without a passport.
Every since then I've been haunted and sought.
By addicts and pushers and plain clothes dicks.
But mostly by junkies who want a quick fix.
My little white grains are nothing but waste.
I'm soft and deadly, so bitter to taste.
I'll make a schoolboy forget his books

And make a world beauty neglect her look
I'll cause a good husband to cast out his wife.
And send a greedy pusher to prison for life.
Am I not just a king. A prince to behold
More treasure then diamonds more precious then gold.
If you wish to hear more of the things I could do.
Of the men I've delighted and the women I slew.
I'll make a man shabby, that once dressed so nice.
And all who use me will go down in vice
I'm king of crime, the prince of corruption.
I'll capture your soul and cause your destruction.
Ah the fuzz have taken you from under my wing.
They dare to defy me. I who am king.
At nights you toss and turn and won't sleep.
You'll rise in the morning so humble and weak.
You'll be cold then hot and you'll vomit and cough.
After ten days of madness you might throw it off.
You'll curse my name and down me in speech.
But you'd pick me up again. If I were in reach.
As you lay awake planning your fate.
You know I'll be waiting just beyond the gate.
I gave you a warning you didn't take heed.
So put your feet in the stir ups and mount my steed.
Put your foot in the stir ups and ride me well.
For the white horse of heroin will ride you to hell.

HORACE BELL If you had any inkling of an idea that maximum-security prison is in any way shape or form, secure, then do we have a bubble burster for you this week. This next writer, who's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, gives us a piece where he chronicles certain events while incarcerated. From poor medical treatment [there virtually is none because then that would mean more work for the guards, and who wants to do more work?] to race riots, Horace talks about many disturbing occurrences that go on where he is. And it's a shame that there's so many flaws to a system that many men and women in our communities have been sent to. He then concludes with a poem titled, "Justice," where he inspiringly explains how he's not giving up hope and when justice prevails, he will be let out. We appreciate all the information, you taught us a thing or two through your wisdom. We first met Horace Bell when the publication was in it's infancy. Thanks for coming back into our lives!

Maximum Security

On 7-9-98 shortly after 6:00 a.m. I was called out for x-ray line, I went downstairs and attempted to explain to guards I couldn't bend or squat due to disc degeneration and arthritis of a chronic nature. I explained to them I needed to go into the holding cell and strip out due to my medical condition. The control guard had previously took me on a interview to speak to a counselor in the program office, a female guard was the second part of the escort. I explained to them I was unable to strip out due to my arthritis. One guard cuffed me up, and the female used the security wong, she touched my buttocks with the device and I told her it was molestation, unwanted! The male guard didn't reveal this to the two guards who came to escort me, to add insult to injury, one of the guards said I get down on the floor and strip out. One of them ask the unit regular if he knew anything about my arthritis? He lied and told them, I don't know. This was the straw that broke the camel's back, they left! The guards come because the doctor ordered x-rays to support my request for a chrono of my medical condition, now that's out the window!

It's ironic because the regular was made aware of my arthritis when he came to escort me over to see a supervisor, he cuffed me up and I was wonged. During the interview with the supervisor, the issue of my arthritis and paying for the follow-up care, he said he'd check into it. At the medical examination I distinctly told the doctor I have a numb right instep, it's been that way since 1998, back of the thigh, part of the groin, and back of the arm. Allegedly, he was familiar with the symptoms I described to him and based on my request for a medical chrono he ordered x-rays for support to determine the level of arthritis activity stationary or worse! The regular came to search my cell, I did the best I could to strip out pain free, yet to demoralize me in front of the other guard, he asked me to squat, I told him I couldn't because of my medical condition, he pushed further, bend over and spread your cheeks! Once again I reminded him this was impossible, very, very, very, painful, spasms as a aftermath. He left her and alleged I refused to strip out correctly therefore, I refused shower and yard, which wasn't true. Both the regular and control seemed to get some unspoken pleasure out of mistreating me.

7-9-98 one guard called another to go out of his way and continue mistreatment.

7-10-98 once again the same guard attempted to get another guard, not to let me out for yard, yet it had no effect, considering I wasn't under any current restrictions, the request was false and unfounded. I began to file staff complaints against them.

8-31-98 you almost never get a chance to talk to the doctor long enough to obtain all the medications and examination required for adequate medical care. The guards sit in the hallway, you sit in a chair facing the doctor. The doctor is facing the guards, the guards do the escort to the hospital they make signals to the doctor to hurry up, or terminate the interview. What's happening is the guards want to hurry up and do all the escorts, that way they don't have any more work to do. And basically the rest of the day becomes a kick back situation. While the prisoner sits in his cell probably worse off than before going to the clinic because he can't adequately address all of his medical needs because the guards make the program revolve around them.

9-9-98 the ninja downstairs has a vegetarian diet, the guard issued him an incorrect tray, he brought it to the C.O.'s attention who responded: you get whatever is on the tray! He tried to reason with the racist C.O., but to no avail. The C.O.s want an extraction to get extra pay, the C.O. told the ninja "looks like it's gonna be a nice day anyway," meaning he was gonna make extra money. Indeed! The extraction went down, dude was maced, cuffed up and removed from the cell, once they got him out of the cell, they twisted his wrist, unnecessary force, racism, white supremacy. We all suffered

Justice

I am running out of stuff to write
Been doing it for 30 years
Pouring out my emotions
And rivers of tears

Somehow I reach down
Deep within my core
Uncovering every stone
Coming up with more

I spend this time in prison
For crimes I did not commit
Filing appeal after appeal
Until I write one that fit

It's going on ten years
Been a long haul
With every muscle, tissue, fiber
I give it my all!

I never give up hope
Life means too much to me
One day I'll walk out of prison
Justice setting me free!

in the pod, coughing, sneezing, choking, no shower, no medical attention.

9-25-98 not much happen today except some fool decided to get cell extracted. He set off the fire sprinkler, his wish came true, the C.O.s cell extracted him, as soon as he got sprayed once with the pepper spray, all the punk came out of him. We suffered in the pod, no respite, which is all a part a being in this prison and dealing with the guards.

3-7-99 I was released from the SHU today, transferred to Pelican Bay B-yard orientation now, the entire yard is on lockdown, state of emergency, no movement except for the protective custody inmates in transition service unit, they're former high ranking prison gang members. Debriefing, providing critical information to the administration about prison gangs and their structure. Only level one inmates were allowed to stay out at night and clean up the shower and tiers.

3-11-99 five days later I was classified by a unit classification committee, I was transferred to A-yard. That evening the female in the tower spent her shift showering the tier, each pick of hers would first stand in the cell door while it was open, butt naked for her, she'd cover her eyes and smile.

3-12-99 on this date a race riot ensued on B-yard involving 80 people, this yard as a consequence was slammed down for a day, all the guards on A-yard went to assist on B-yard.

3-15-99, there was an unorganized peaceful protest sit down on A-yard this date. The damn fools weren't sure what they wanted. So they asked for everything! Once a settlement was reached the strike ended and everybody went back to their cells. This afternoon one gang attacked another, oddly enough, only the ones attacked were locked down.

3-18-99 the ones attacked were let off lock down, and they immediately retaliated and stabbed a rival. Now that group is on lockdown!

3-31-99 during cement yard for this other gang who are on locked down, a hit was carried out. Everybody was ordered down on the ground while the guards ran over to 3-block. They emerged from 3-block with a victim who had been stabbed once in the lower left side, and once in the upper right side under his arm. Before he reached the clinic area a wheelchair was provided to him. As he rode by, one could sense his pain, he also let it be known by his groans, while the wheels of the chair rolled over the bump and grind of the asphalt. Yard was cancelled and minutes later a suspect was escorted across the yard.

4-9-99, two other gang members were attempting to assault another fellow gang member, the yard went down, one of the original guys was taken away, then the yard was resumed.

4-15-99, the first incident today involved a C.O. and a black, the yard went down, all the C.O.s ran to 8-block across the yard. One black suspect was cuffed and emerged from the building. He was escorted away and the yard resumed it was determined he had a beef with the C.O. The second round came as I cruised around the yard. Two white boys began a kickboxing match. The C.O.s quickly ran over and arrested both men, yard resumed.

The Rage Within

How can I let you see,
The emotional storm inside of me?
How do I make you understand,
The battle going on within this man?

Forced to battle this beast within,
That turns me rage into sin,
Where regrets and sorrow run so deep,
They even haunt me in my sleep.

Forever losing sight of the ones I love most,
As their memories become like ghost,
Always too busy to lend a hand,
Never enough time to love this man.

Forced to see it matters not who they are,
For they'll only walk so far,
Down this dark road that has no end,
The road I must travel to atone my sins.

Thanks once again for the encouraging
words and invite to keep submitting my
work.

Awake At Night

It's hard for me to tell you,
The thoughts that fill my head,
As I lay awake at night,
Alone upon my bed.

How do I tell you,
That without you I would die,
How do I make you feel me,
As I reach across the sky?

The answers do elude me,
And echo through my mind,
Like lonely love that fills the veins,
Of a man doing time.

So if you should awake at night,
And start to wonder why,
Know that it's me lying here,
Reaching across the sky.

I Know You

Maybe I knew you from days of old,
Somewhere along the misty shores,
Where magic and mystical spirits ruled,
Maybe that where I knew you?

Or could it of been somewhere in a dream,
As I laid slumbering on the green?
Or out upon a stormy sea,
Searching for lands to see?

Maybe we were deities of ancient lore,
Who held the keys to loves door,
Not allowing one heart bye,
Unless for their love we knew they'd die?

Or could it of been just a few years ago,
Flying hell bent down life's road,
With you always at my side,
Like a modern day Bonnie and Clyde?

It really matters not when or where,
For my heart knew you were there,
Walking with me hand and hand,
Seeking forever in the summer lands.

CLARK STUHR

This next writer is definitely about love and not hate. He first writes in a letter to us that he thinks guns are our problem and then he also sends us three poems about love. He's been writing for us for a very long time and we really enjoy it. He's been deemed a Beat veteran. In fact, he talks about how it was for him 20 years ago in the hood. The equivalent to revering someone for going to college in upper class neighborhoods, more poverty stricken neighborhoods: revere people who've been to jail. As a matter of fact, they revere them to the point of emulation. He's writing from the Washington State Department of Corrections Facility in Walla Walla, Washington. We will close this BWO section with a bang thanks to the thoughts that are coming out of this next writer's head. Thank you for what you've shared...

TBW (The Beat Within)

When I first fell on this beef twenty-years ago the mindset of that time in the hood was to act like, dress like and be like our brothers coming out of the joint. Stand tall, be proud and don't ever let anyone disrespect you or yours. This I knew and understood but with it came a heavy price to be paid on demand, to show your heart no matter the cost. But even so this I understood as well.

Now days I cant even begin to understand the mindset and it took me awhile to realize that there isn't one anymore. What prevails now is a state of confusion, meth induced craziness and everything in between. And sadly society is still trying to battle this with long-term incarceration without rehabilitation.

In your editorial you asked what could be done to stop this madness? Well my friends it seems to me we are doing it to some extent in trying to reach out to our troubled and at risk youth. In showing them how to express their pain and confusion in writing and letting them know someone cares about them and wants to see them succeed in life. But we know much more needs to be done and until the stated and federal powers that be recognize that you cannot battle a sickness with punishment we are not going to be able to give these at risk youth the tools they need. Sure we can change their mind set while their incarcerated and I'm there with you trying to do just that but that's only the beginning, as we all know al to well. These young people need follow up care in the way of drug treatment, education, safe and healthy environments and lots of love and respect to build up their self worth. I hear over and over it needs to start in the home but I don't think they realize most of these youths done have a home to even go back to and 90% of those that do are better off away from them where they had been neglected, beaten or sexually abused. In short they need people in their lives that will not give up on them and will give them the love, understanding and support they deserve. I for one will never give up and if I can just reach even one through my writing then I'm on the right page for once in my life, and so are those of you trying to do the same.

Guns are not the problem, it's the mindset that showed them how to pick up that gun and use it. I don't have all the answers, none of us do but I do know the power in solidarity and as long as we all stand together in saving our young people we will do just that. It might only be a couple here and there for now but someday it will be all of them, and in doing so we save ourselves as well.

Well TBW, I finally landed in the SHU about a week ago and am getting settled in. I'm not to happy about doing another year program just because I have a STG (Security Threat Group) file but we live with the choices we make regardless of how stupid or long ago they were. There's only one way off the STG files and that's to debrief and I wont do it. It seems like time is nothing more then sitting in the SHU for years on end anymore. I'm good though as I will always be.

Thanks once again for the encouraging words and invite to keep submitting my work. I will do just hat as it feels good to give of myself for a change instead of taking for myself. I'm enclosing three more poems along the line of love found, love lost and the frustration of long distant love. Even relationships that do last are very had on both to maintain.

All right my friend thank you once again. Take good care, be safe and keep up the good work.

In struggle...

J.D. We've got some real heat for y'all this week. And he starts by giving props to those writers who actually put thought into their pieces. In fact he names a heavy hitting writer out of Alameda County Juvenile Hall and also lets him know the piece that touched him. He also gives props to The Beat for the great work we're doing. But after reading his three poems, we realized that we're the ones that should be giving props. He's an excellent writer as he observes and is able to regurgitate what he's observed on paper. This week he observes a whole lot about himself, but he doesn't stop there. He also observes a blues singer, who from what we've read, has every right to be singing the blues. For instance, the guitar he plays his blues music on is down to its last two strings. Not only that but he sits on a dusty seat while singing the blues. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA.

A Scarred Man

Seeing life through a dead man's eyes,
Late nights I cry "dry" blood,
Survived the slugs,
They pulled the "plug" on a thug's fast life,
Last life wasted unda a streetlight,
Prayed on them hopeless nights,
Ask the "heavens" to help me get my focus right,
But my blood type "Ice,"
Raised in the land of the snipes,
Needles and pipes in the sand box,
Babies born and raised to bang the "block"
Hustle rocks and evade the cops,
Watch my life flash in the enemy's crosshairs,
Ain't no "return" once ya' "tagged,"
Black bags scattered across the "gutter,"
We all born to get invaded,
Never heard of a shelter built ta' help
A brother "out" the ghetto,
Holding metal like a baby bottle,
Spitting hollows full throttle
"Kill or be killed" is our motto,
If I don't make it to see tomorrow,
No sorrows,
Cause tomorrow ain't promised,
And so my hopes are "ironic,"
Make a few gees,
Bust something clean on these, and smoke 'till I vomit,
Nevertheless I'll bless my folks till I reach
The Promise land,
Try to give all that I can,
To my nieces and nephews outstretched hands,
If you knock you'll never understand,
May never even give a damn,
How indeed I became a scarred man...

To The Beat

Hey! Hey! What's going on this time around, this is just a quick few lines from ya' boy sending my utmost respect to both The Beat and Beat readers. First off, I appreciate the fact that you guys (Beat) printed my work and afforded The Beat readers a chance to feel me, "on my level." That's a good look no doubt! Also I would like to commend some of the youngstas and also some of the vets who took out the time to share their feelings and insight with the rest of us.

As I read some of these "pieces," I can't help but marvel at all of the creativity that fills these pages. I really find it miraculous how they offer written commentary on some political subjects as well as insight on the things that have transpired in their everyday issues. I can't say that I'm shocked, because I am well aware of the fact that a lot of the beings that society has shunned, are in fact smart people. There are many cases that are just flat out "off hook" with their train of thought — but in most cases brothers and sistas that came up struggling got good sense — It's a fact that when you go through that everyday street drama — you develop rapidly in the mind — because the fact of the matter is ain't no such thing as I don't understand when you "struggling" — your learn to get it together real fast —

Anyhow let's not get off track — my respect goes out to the men and women, and young men and women who put down their pieces. This week I was intrigued — so I felt the need to holla and let y'all know how I feel without "name-droppin." Well maybe just one name, Rahimi (150 crew) "The Demon's Shadow." Keep it raw dawg, I was feeling you all the way; we just got to figure out the best way to keep you out "The Demon's Shadow" feel me?

Well that's it for this one Beat — y'all continue to do what y'all do — ya' definitely got a friend in me... With Respect

Through These Eyes

Happiness is a sight to see,
Such a fight for me to achieve a certain level
Of purity — in the shhh... I see,
Even in my dreams my sight is cursed by hurtful
scenes,
"Through these eyes,"
Sometimes life surprises me with inviting things,
Shhh... I never seen in my wildest "dreams,"
So serene that I feel like I'm "free,"
No more "mental" catastrophes,
No more hate flashing through my mind
While be tryna sleep,
"Through these eyes..."
I done seen life,
I done seen pain,
I done seen love,
I've watched haters "hate,"
"Through these eyes..."
I done seen everything,
You name it I'll try to explain it,
I could never understand why life is perpetuated
I've seen brothers "die" "through these eyes,"
I wish I could hide my ability to visualize
The "other side" through brown eyes,
Sound slides past me unnoticed,
What can be seen can't be quoted,
Hold it!
Gimme a few seconds,
I'ma try to pass you all I done seen,
But I gotta warn you if ya' heart is weak,
What I've seen "through these eyes,"
Contains enough drama to last you fifty
X-Mas Eves...

Sings The Blues

Peering down at the street through a wide open window,
A dilapidated building located somewhere on the other
end of town,
A battered bass guitar with only two strings,
A dusty old chair where he sits and he sings,
"Momma love her only child the other six don't even
count
Daddy home but he in his room playin' records and
won't come out,"
I got the blues,
Oh I got the blues,
Orange skies and premature stars
Add a serene backdrop to the backed up traffic,
He notices the havoc that don't even exist in the world
below that window sill,
Flimsy hat fixed atop his head, there he sits in his dusty
chair, pluckin' at the remaining strings,
On his battered guitar,
There he sits and sings...
"Luck ain't been so lucky since he step'd off the train
Sunny days ain't been so sunny 'cause honey can't
stand the rain"
I got the blues,
The night's breeze passes over his face,
And he welcomes its gentle play,
With the moon over head offering its phosphorescent
glow,
His eyes never leave the now empty street,
He just remains in his dusty seat,
By his window,
Pluckin' at the two strings on his battered guitar,
There he sits and sings...
"Nights is always lonely, mornings always cold
One day they'll come back to town
And we'll all be smiling no more frowns"
I got the blues,
Oh lord I got the blues,
Finally he closes his eyes and drifts off...

Tall Tales

I'm sitting in my prison cell at the age of 18. My mind feels as if it is fading away. I remember back to my juvenile hall days up on the hill on 150 Crew (Alameda County Juvenile Hall). I used to think that prison is where the real gangstas got to go to earn respect. Ha, such memories I now sit back on and reminisce. Now that I'm actually in the whole prison mix. I now realize that it's a waste of precious time. If I only knew that all them tall tales about prison where all bogus and a lie I would have tried my damnest to avoid this place.

But now I been down for about three years now and I got five more to go in this time wasting place. But I'm now glad that I got brought to realization that prison is not what its cracked up to be. Your homeboys who you think is down for you will turn their back in an instant to gain personal fame. This entire pride riding people be doing in here is whack as hell. The game that they try to enforce in here ain't a game it's a self-destruction token that they're putting in they're slot machine they call life! This whole prison get down is a waste of time. So please don't believe the tall tale lies!

Brother Love

(Dedicated to William Grajeda)

Its brother love, so solid it can't be broke
Bond so tight it would make a normal person choke
We blood, can't get know closer than that
When one of us has problems, the other's there to have his back

It's brother love, it only comes once in a lifetime
That's why I cherish it, and never let it fall behind,
Its respect and loyalty that keeps us "as one" together
Because we both seem to ride through both good and bad weather

It's my brother's love that keeps me forever going
We ain't got to stress cause we both be knowing
That we'll love each other until our dying days
And can't nobody, not even prison,
Confinement or the devil take that away!

For everybody that got brothers out there please cherish him or her for what they are cause you know tomorrow is never promised. My love and respects to all the beat readers and The Beat facilitators. Alratos.

CHRIS GRAJEDA

This powerful young man has come along way since we first met him. And we say this all the time, but it's because it is so true. In fact, when we think he can't surprise us anymore, he sends us something that just reminds us of why he's so special in our lives in the first place. We've heard him being tired of the gang lifestyle before, however that never ceases to amaze us because if you knew him like we knew him, you would've thought he'd be leading that life forever. What strikes us the most is hearing him speak in high regards to his brother. We say this because while young Chris was going through his gang entrenchment phase, he made it a point to speak ill of his brother because of rivalries that probably weren't rooted with them in the first place. It's always a pleasure to have Chris published in our pages because he brings a very unique perspective to us that teaches every time. He's writing from the Deuel Vocational Institute in Tracy, CA. We first met Chris many years ago in the ol' Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

If I only knew that all them tall tales about prison where all bogus and a lie I would have tried my damnest to avoid this place ...

The Game

I'm just an ordinary gangsta condemned to the game
A game that ain't a game no more being that everything aint the same

I was designed to stay devoted to what I was taught
And to endure all the agony and pain that the game brought

I been seduced by the game from a very young age
Filled with anguish and pain and purely formed rage
I got devoured in a lost cause, and sacrifices of sin
I was set out designated to come to an early end
I fell blind to the fact that the game is messed up
So I had no other choice but to turn my back on it before I got stuck

I got tired of giving and never receiving nothing back
I accumulated too much hate that slowly began to stack
Now I say, "Eff the game" I'll ride solo-bolo till I die
And I'll forever keep it official with my chest out and head high!!

C. MACK WHITELAW

No matter what we do, whether positive or negative, there will be people who hate on us. We live in a capitalistic country for crying out loud, it was founded on people hating on people. This next first time writer talks about how haters have affected him and it seems like he's just trying to handle his business while minding his business. The funny thing about haters is everyone will say they've been hated on, but no one will ever admit to hating. We wonder if this next writer has ever hated on someone else. He's writing from Utah State Prison in Draper, Utah.

Playa Hatas

I'm tired of haters in my business
It feels like the twilight zone what is this?
You're always worried about mine
When you need to be doing your own time!
You gossip like a girl that shhh is a trip
What if I said I heard you was a snitch?

Every day drama for you is all it took
How does it feel when the shoe is on the other foot?
Remember I'll do good through stormy weather
It's real sad that you don't have your shhh together
Pops told me it will get greater later
So mind yours and stay out of people's business you playa hata

A. ELIAS

Short in actual word length, but speaks volumes... What we get from this is a very compassionate heart. "I wouldn't wish this upon know one." We also get the deceit and spontaneity that goes on in such a place as prison. "Foes become friends, friends become foes." He's writing from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. And we're glad he conveyed such a powerful message with so little words.

My World

This world I live in,
I wish upon no one,
Full of lies and wicked minds,
Treachery all around,
Foes become friends, friends become foes,
This ain't the place to be,
Live free and be free!

Every day drama for you is all it took
How does it feel when the shoe is on the other foot?

A Call To All So-Called Gangs

A call or should I say a cry to all so-called "Gangs!" Which Gang is used in a deceptive context when applied to oppressed people? Since the beginning of history, humans have coalesced into groups, communed and grown! People outlived nature's oppressive conditions and achieved technical heights by getting together and thinking collectively. Towards the oppressed, some may label this grouping as a gang. The proper word though is organization as said by J. Blaze Cruz in "The Evolution Of Ghetto Style Organizations." "Why Must We Unite?" By none other than Mr. Chan Rodriguez. For without unity our ultimate success is but a dream far from anything feasible or even remotely real, all that separates us should be thrown to the side, hurting you is hurting me. How could I claim that I ride? Here is a taste of my thoughts!

WE (as a people) need to unite in order to pose a formidable threat to those that oppress us! Individuals can be pacified by those in power pacified or silenced. But, if we all unify for one common cause, the oppressors wouldn't even entertain an attempt at pacifying the multitudes of us and to silence us (silence=kill) would mean war! Contrary to what many people may believe, this government couldn't handle a war of us against them! Financially it would be crippling. The economy would crumble. Sure there will be a great amount of casualties. But, there always are in war. But, if you fear death, then you'll never live! We have to unite beloved brothers and sisters because otherwise we lose focus of who our enemy is and continue to perpetuate violence against our own. When we allow ourselves to fall into different factions, we're only facilitating the divide and conquer strategy from our enemies. We need to unite in order to make our enemy suffer. They deserve to suffer from creating the circumstances in a system that breeds the self-hate that we've promoted since the late 60's.

We have to become dedicated to us instead of our destruction. Your pain has to become mine and vice versa. Now if we attack our enemy with the same vigor that we attack each other I'm sure that we'd be victorious. They (our enemy) love and thrive off of our division. I took an oath to become my enemy's nightmare instead of my brothers and sisters! I am an educated, physically fit warrior who is willing to die for what I believe in. I am expendable in the eyes of our struggle. We have to unite to promote that mind state. We need to because the people can't engage the enemy with a divided energy. We'll always be too weak to expect victory, our army is too divided. We are the people's army. We all must find that common ground in which to meet on.

- 1). We is the power of our people
- 2). Globally we are the majority so we out number those who oppress us and last but not least, it's time to take our proper places, as the controllers of this earth! We need to unite now while this nation is distracted in Iraq. By them deploying troops they become that much vulnerable. They are opened to various strategic hits — strategic being the key word! They aren't ready! I'm sure I only could be a thorn in their side alone. But, if I had all of you I'm sure the United States would be in a real state of emergency! Let's lead by example for those who come behind us. It's time to create our legacy. Otherwise they'll follow our destructive habits. Our unity is the only way. We'll never produce a movement any other way. If we don't stand for something, we'll fall for anything! Unite we stand divided we fall. Separation is the enemy's companion unity his enemy.

Your ghetto soldier, Brother Chan!

BROTHER CHAN Another Beat Within veteran is being published in our pages this week. Brother Chan also known as the mighty Chan Rodriguez writes some topics he'd like the young people to address in his letter to "The Beat Within Family." He gives us our props and it's always a pleasure to get compliments, so thank you. Then he goes into talking about people who project the image of a gangsta, but in all actuality they're projecting an image that really isn't them. We get this a lot and we know there are people who wear masks to make themselves look like someone more intimidating than they really are. His third and concluding piece is about how we should all stop fighting and killing each other. And instead, come together to fight a bigger battle, the battle that's going on between the government and our communities. We agree with the general statement, but when we start talking about unifying to push something by any means necessary, we have to beware that sometimes it's not wise to fight fire with fire. How can we solve the hate that's displayed towards us with hate displayed towards them? Just something to think about... He's writing from the Upstate Correctional Facility in Malone, New York.

To My Beat Within Fam

What's popping? It has been sometime now since I last drop some lines. Mo' less, pardon me! But I was over here (Upstate Correctional Facility) caught up with crazy legal work. I'm fighting to get out of this box. For those of you who don't know, Upstate is the worstest box one can be in. They insolate us (inmates) from the masses, plus its administration is designed to deploy traps to keep those that come here forever. However, those who don't know me shall now. Also know I present myself to you in the purest form of love, loyalty, honor, respect and peace straight from the heart. I just wanted to drop you a few lines to let you know that I'm definitely feeling those who are gracing the pages of The Beat Within. Jail energy is felt 110%, because despite all that we (prisoners) are going through and been through it shows that we still got within us brothers and sisters who're focused in spite of all the bullshhh that we are face on a daily basics. So, keep up the good work, and just know that it'll pay off in the long run. Just stick to the script and keep on doing what you do, because nobody can take you out of your element but you. A person can only trigger some shhh that'll disturb your square, but it's up to you and you alone to make the decision to step outside of it. Straight up! Nevertheless I have forty-four topics in which I hope you (The Beat Within writers) can give some feed back on what I composed or should I say what I am going to share.

- 1). "Things fall apart"- At times I feel as if my entire life done fall apart and I don't have a clue as to how I'm suppose to get it back together again. But what I normally do is I take the negative feelings and flip it in to a positive (dig). I keep my thoughts clear to better enable me to focus upon how I am getting my life back upon the right path. I've learned that shhh only fall apart if you allow it to do so without any effort of trying to keep shit in the correct order or perspective.
- 2). "Admitting you're wrong"- It takes a man and woman to own up to his or her wrong doings. But it takes even better men or women to admit there wrongs. Think about it and write your view on this. Maybe the world would be a much better place if we had men or women of such caliber controlling it (word).
- 3). "Choosing friends"- Honestly, this is a real tough one (why), because now days it's type difficult to really distinguish the real from the fakes and the fakes from the snakes. But I read somewhere or another that friends are like autumn leaves. You can find them any and everywhere, but real true friends are like diamonds, they're very hard to find understand?
- 4). "Purpose"- This is what we as human beings have been trying to figure out for as long as we've been on earth. One thing's for certain beloves everyone was put here for a reason and I guess it's our obligation to find out what that shhh may be as well as what "purpose" we serve being here on this earth or just being human beings — which one?

I stop there for now, but know that I'll be picking up right where I left off. I wanted to push you, my Beat fam, my thoughts. Hopefully I reach the view of your eyes and if so I hope plus pray I get a copy.

Those Who Portray That Gangster Image

But Really Isn't No G!

Those who are reading this are bugging right now, saying to themselves, like who the hell is this? Don't worry, by the time you get to the end of this letter you'll know exactly who I am. I am writing you to warn you. It's only fair that I do so because you are completely no match for me. So to soothe my conscience I figure I'd give you a heads up, and drop some jewels on you at the same time. See, you're young and you still have the time to grow, but your growth is slow, which makes you under developed. How you are now reminds me of when I was like 15, when I still felt like I had something to prove when I was ignorant and lost, and searching for an identity.

One of the most important things that I've learned is that we (Latino's and Blacks in particular) stagnate our own growth and development by our unwillingness to change. That is — change is growth! In order to grow one must change. That is a supreme truth, and it's evident in any and all living beings on this planet. There is nothing that doesn't change as it grows or grows as it changes; From plants to humans, and everything in between. But the change that I'm speaking of is of the mind. People who refuse to change their train of thought, and explore other and new ideas, stunt their own mental grow and development. (Change and growth, are a natural part of evolution. For a person to confine their self to one line of thought and reasoning is unnatural, and detrimental to one's own mind, self-containment, mental bondage, and slavery. Don't be a slave of your thoughts, be a master of them!

Self-control starts in the mind. If you allow someone

to influence/control your thoughts (mind), and then you relinquish control of your actions (body). So, before I move on let me give you some words of wisdom to remember (if I haven't already) be careful of your thoughts because your thoughts become words, be careful of your words because your words become actions, be careful of your actions because your actions become a character, and be careful of your character because your character becomes your destiny "what will your destiny be?"

Moving right along. In this world, there are those you mess with, and those you don't mess with. I am one of those who you do not mess with. But you have; now it's too late. See, when I first told you that I didn't want to speak to you or any dealings with you, I was doing that for your own safety because I seen what type of ninja you was. Ignorant, immature, mental underdeveloped, you mistook my humbleness as being meek. What you think of yourself, I know that you're not built that. I know that G image that you're portraying is just a façade. You are not fit to survive because you cannot stand on your own. Your survival is based on the support you get from the pack you run with. But you're a sheep in wolves clothing, and it's just a matter of time before you get exposed. Dancing with wolves is dangerous and I can sense your fear, your fear of not being reorganized, of not being expected, the fear you have of being yourself because you think it won't be good enough. That fear you have is like an open wound, and in this ocean of life you're swimming with sharks. Next time be yourself because I know you truly aren't a G par!

DELFINO MARTINEZ

In order to must humble himself to the maximum. And for some, especially the ones that act as though they're the hardest people ever to walk the earth, surrendering or even humbling one self can be a monumental task. Who wants to admit they're weak? Well, this next writer isn't weak at all, yet he writes about surrendering his will over to his higher power. For him, humbling himself is an act of courage and spiritual strength. For others, sometimes it's just a cop out to not deal with their current situations. However, we hope that if he continues on his spiritual journey, he'll have more "Beautiful Days," down the road. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA.

Beautiful Days

Oh what days we shared,
The nights we had,
Holding each other so close
For comfort...

There's days we cried,
And days we laughed
Oh what beautiful days
they were...

some days were rough
some days were calm
Oh what beautiful days
We shared...

Those days we had, just sitting
In silence,
Those days we talked,
Were beautiful days
Yes they were...

But the days we missed,
Were the days I spent
Behind these prison
Walls...

Our day is near, I just
Can't wait,
To spend the rest of
My days,
By your side...

I Surrender

Oh Lord, guide me, protect me, help me
Teach me the ways of your righteousness
Show me the glory of your lovingness
I know I stumbled and fell along the way
I take a look back to my past
When I know I'm not supposed to
And that's where I need you the most
To help me, to guide me, to show me the way
Teach me how to look forward,
And leave the past behind...
Because I know you have
I lift up my hands to you
With my eyes closed
And open arms
And I pray to you
And I ask you
To guide me, teach me
To show me what your love is,
"I surrender."
To only you, my Lord, my God, my Savior
Oh Lord, teach me, show me
And guide me for the rest of my days
I know what life has to offer
But I'm struggling to find my way...

There have been many roads
I have came across
And many battles I have fought
But the battles are only getting tougher
I need you to show me
And put me on the right path in life
I know the roads ahead
Of me are only going to get tougher...
So I put my faith in your hands
"I Surrender."
My mind, my heart and my soul...

ALEX SHELTON We first got introduced to Alex Shelton through his incredible artwork, but as he started sending us poems we realized that he's magnificently versatile. Whether painting pictures, literally, or doing it with words, this man has the gift of expression. We can feel him and see him within all of his creations and he doesn't know this already, we really enjoy and are grateful for his contributions this far. Well, let's not get teary eyed, for he sends us five outstanding poems, each bringing its own ideas and emotions to the table. A very common theme in his writing, though, is a higher power. For some this is effective and for others it isn't, however you can't knock someone for finding solace in something greater than himself. He also talks a lot about the ills that come along with the gang lifestyle. We know many of you have heard it before, but Alex expresses it like no other. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, and again we really appreciate all you've shared while anxiously awaiting your next great thoughts.

Cataclysmically Phrased

Out of the corner of my wired-up eye I looked down to my
stylish Swatch glowing from the dancing flames of the
B.B.Q. pit
This "G" just couldn't seem to sit
Passing around the potent green
A morgue like quiet teen
It is approaching eight p-m, fire crackling hot above the
chirping crickets and stinging mosquitoes
The homies in a circle laughing and cutting it up orange
faces
Same ones leaving behind body traces
If this busy gangster could have only translated each of
these phrases into the actions of daily life
Then the perfection would be there indeed
As God wished me to be childhood to manhood
It encompasses the short and simple phrases of why I
spent long hours and long days over many roads with tired
feet
Casing houses, busting into cars, tearing up their nice and
neat for years at a time
Phrase sublime
Haven't felt the cool touches of a mother's hand in a
decade,
I couldn't touch because my arms were locked behind my
back under escort to face sight
Another days quotes of prison twilight
As a prison convict all I could see now was the worst side
of these gangsters ruthless phrases of being "cooped-up"
in a lil cell for long lengths of a time, a ruse
This continued isolation can produce
Habitual actions
And many serious rule violations
One week was simply seven identical twenty-four-hour-
days,
One month simply and mathematical way of marking four
such weeks, or thirty days of the sameness
Should of lived in the wilderness
Should have meditated continuously on each word and
phrase of the formula of the Bible, "If God is for us, who
can stand against us"
Back then I could have exhausted its riches
But tomorrow came soon enough – never burning bridges

Always turning and taking a last, long look at ma's lil'
house – finely cropped and mopped
Knowing I could get popped
My body felt the battered
Knuckles, sprains and cramps, and aches and bruises
Everybody loses
God managed to get me through one more day
Blurred monotonously, out with the old gangster man
And in with the new ban
We must be transformed and redeemed if Christ's victory is
to be complete
Virtue of humility and retreat
My morale stands firm and high mind not blank
"Seek first the Kingdom of God"
And all these things will be added to you he is the real
world rank"

Hustle and "G" Down Low

Gangsters need a civilization that is mostly drug
induced
Headed to the school direction to make four times the
money getting kids juiced
He stops tapping his nervous foot on the gas pedal
while a streamlined yellow school bus idles its Engine,
the lights say go
He doesn't see a young kid he only thinks of his own
"Hustle and Flow"
Doesn't care if you are doing good in school
Part of the city is an open grave, miles and miles of
nothingness
Just paved roads leading to apartments and condos of
silent emptiness
Stage one is just the beginning – climbing steps two at
a time,
Elevator cars too slow, like wine
Littered with broken glass, rusted piles of old pipes, and
needles, ceramic tiles
And mounds of dust, slats of wood, and more debris,
He looks out from a tiny terrace and sees
Another willing youngster visible in the distance
All in this land of make-believe
Where these "G" dealers say that everything is all right
and in an instance
After you are here for a while, you start to believe it, you
bought a ball
He's standing tall
He bounces and says, "I'll come back tomorrow
To fulfill youngsters sorrow"
Although tress and birds and animals remain – blurred,
bluish footage of overdose and death drugs, in the end
changes the lives of the people in ways they never have
imagined
Don't be a part of the other thousand.

I Am Harmoniously Free

I write these paragraphs as the devil laughs
Breaking free
From the gangster governing guiding, counseling, and
advising the family tree
It ain't for me. No anxiety
I now have an inner sense of peace and tranquility
Make Satan flee, I am freed

If my dad was were alive he would be proud of me
Prosperous and happy!
Living in this changeless reality,
Not disturbed by the passage of time in prison or
The variations of spirits caught and bound
Too tied to never hear the unfolding of guidance poetry
sound
I am harmoniously free, fast like Bruce Lee
Yesterday is gone, Tomorrow is not..
But Today your darkness can be dissolved
Into a championship Freedom, Bible taught
Not a blood clot...
Just forget about the weeping over short comings and
Mistakes and sins of yesterday
Only everything that is good in today
A buoyant zest for becoming God's child
Yes even a gangster gone wild
God will make your precious life a vast array
All men and women can be harmoniously free — a non-
lease
Straight as a crease
Beyond your greatest dream, when your body starts to
scream
As personal as your heart beat
Your quiet contentment
You can experience a new- loving Christian family tree
A divine presence of peace, joy, and being "Free"

Postponing The Inevitable Forever

Years past
The didn't last
Four-thirty a-m – my beeping alarm blasts
My eardrums as I proceed to roll back my mattress, clean
my cell by hand
Birdbath, sippin' on Folgers as my mind
Was made up to forever postpone the inevitable "G" kind
Waiting for meals on wheels
Hearing oldies to get my thrills
Leaning back I shut my eyes, trying not to move a muscle,
thinking of these wicked pioneers I was leaving behind
On a ugly crusade, stretched to the limits of human
endurance
Brigades in blackness with no blessed assurance
I was partly saddened by the thought that I could do
nothing for them any longer except pray and commend
them to God Almighty
Who will seal their name in the book of life
Tightly
But are you worthy? Acknowledge God daily and nightly
One must stop to reflect on the most basic meaning of
doctrine for who had known the mind of our Lord, or who
has been his counselor
It was never a mortal creature
Or a "G" teacher
My ways are not your ways
Says the Lord; as far as the heavens are my ways above
your ways
"G's" can't seem to postpone the daily rounds
The zeal knows no bounds
If we were in the old days all the tremendous crimes you
commit would be enough to get one hung
By the fancy guns a "G" gets sprung
County passing out time that wows others
I could do standing on my head, a commentator is another
I was a "G" in misery
When authorities became known I was a gang member as I
was cursed at;
I was shunned;
I was looking down upon and despised by society I'm
trying to tell you
I was a thing of no value
Stolen goods I would sell you
This "G" couldn't even walk into a store without having to
see people act jittery and looking at me like I was going to
shoot the damn place up!
Yikes!
I pledge to live by my new conversion to do what "God"
expects and likes!

Frozen Keynotes

Gangsters striking a chord but
Not musically or to the Lord
Skipping a beat
Sitting on the piano seat
Can't play a drum
He'd rather drink rum
Mumbling-a tune
In June
Sharpened drumsticks
To get his kicks
Un-tuned guitars collecting dust
Strings turning to rust
Packing iron, a must
Can't keep a steady woman is it love? Not just lust
Yourself you can't even trust
And then comes a bust
Don't worry what you shall eat or drink
Prison key clink
Wishing you can be with this –same woman and not in
the penitentiary
Vindictiveness
Intolerable condition, cramped up cells and no
rendition
Summertime right around the corner, walking with
"G's" on a dust yard
Cause Satan is the leader of the band and he struck
your chord
Too deaf to hear the angels bangin' cymbals, sweat and
tears,
Music and the vilest of insults, minutes and hours turn
into years
Can't bang the bass pedal hard enough cause' your
strength is dying down
And your keynotes are frozen
Satan's chosen
Chanting hymns
Grubbing on zoom-zooms and wham-wham's
Can't even get a lil' church organ to make some noise
Not-even a banjo, a trumpet, or flute would do the job,
and why?
Who's the one kickin' it with the gangster boys!

*Too deaf to hear the angels bangin' cymbals, sweat and tears,
Music and the vilest of insults, minutes and hours turn into years*

DANA Once a participant in our Alameda County Juvenile Hall workshops, this next writer has moved on to a rehabilitation center called, "R House," in Santa Rosa, CA. This week, Dana sends us a poem that we think asks a very wise question, "How can I stay sane with you tempting me?" We assume Dana is talking about drug addiction and we believe that merely asking that question is a good start in attempting to stay sane. We hope Dana found some answers to the question of being tempted for we'd hate to see drugs destroy such an important life like it's done so many others. We appreciate the love and the poem. Keep at it and maybe throughout all this introspection you'll find some solutions to the ongoing problem of drugs.

Temptation

Right there, right there
Right out of my reach
How can I stay sane
With you tempting me?
Everyday, your sweet things
Taking my heart to hectic places
With such a sharp mind

Don't know how I stay in control.

Right there, right there
How can I stay sane
With you tempting me?
Waiting for us to change
Your laugh on replay
Pushing me over the edge
Whenever our bodies meet.
Moment after moment, they're waiting
With their greedy minds, for me to break
From your acid washed heart and lyrical eyes.

Right there, right there
Right out of my reach
How can I stay sane
With you tempting me?

I for one will never give up and if I can just reach even one through my writing then I'm on the right page for once in my life, and so are those of you trying to do the same.

read the rest of Clark Stuhr's BWO piece on page 45

